# Ugly by SordesSana

**Category:** Danny Phantom
**Genre:** Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, Angst, Broken Families, Bullying, C-PTSD (Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), Child Abuse, Child Neglect, Childhood Trauma, Drug Addiction, Emotional Manipulation, Emotional/Psychological Abuse, Emotionally Repressed, Explicit Sexual Content, Extremely Underage, F/F, F/M, Forced Masturbation, Hearing Voices, Heavy Angst, Hurt No Comfort, Implied Childhood Sexual Abuse, Implied/Referenced Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Implied/Referenced Drug Addiction, Implied/Referenced Rape/Non-con, Implied/Referenced Self-Harm, Implied/Referenced Suicide, Incest, Isolation, Loneliness, M/M, Manipulation, Masochism, Mental Anguish, Mental Breakdown, Mental Health Issues, Mental Instability, Molestation, Parent/Child Incest, Past Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, Past Child Abuse, Physical Abuse, Psychological Torture, Rape/Non-con Elements, Self Confidence Issues, Self-Esteem Issues, Self-Harm, Sexual Abuse, Sexual Violence, Suicidal Thoughts, Suicide Attempt, Torture, Underage Drug Use, Underage Masturbation, Underage Prostitution, Underage Rape/Non-con, Underage Sex, Verbal Abuse, severe major depression
**Characters:** Danny Fenton, Dash Baxter, Jack Fenton, Jazz Fenton, Kwan (Danny Phantom), Maddie Fenton, Orginal Characters (Baxter Family), Sam Manson, Star (Danny Phantom), Tucker Foley, Valerie Gray, Vlad Masters
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**Summary:**

Dash had spent his entire life trying to live the life that he thought he should, or at least one that would appear that way for others than wouldn't know better.

One filled with success, vigor, and indulgence, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

Each waking moment spent hiding the truth of his depravity, the filth that he writhed in from the very moment that he was born.

Each day, existing as the shadow that his persona demanded that he should be.

Time, however, demands this be unraveled, torn asunder as his mind and body descend into a decisive dissonance, one that he may never come out the same again.

**Relationships:** Danny Fenton/Sam Manson, Dash Baxter/Danny Fenton, Jack Fenton/Maddie Fenton, Jazz Fenton/Kwan, Maddie Fenton/Vlad Masters, Tucker Foley/Valerie Gray
**Comments:** 3
**Kudos:** 17
**Collections:** Bad Things Happen, Bring the tissues, Danny Phantom, Danny phantom

# 1. A Not-So-Distant Memory

**Author's Note:**

> This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.
>
> To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)
>
> Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.
>
> Thank you.

**Summary for the Chapter:**

> It was a memory from so long ago, something like a dream, but he had been living this nightmare his entire life.
> This was only of them.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> I've made slight changes, added dialogue, and removed some stuff, but it's the same as it was before, just mildly different, but not by much.

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The thick and hazy morning air wafting through his tiny lungs was suffocating, a small child laid beside his mother, spotting with those

tearful azure eyes weak and shaky breaths heaving from her labored chest. The only sign that he could see that she was still there, despite the littering of dark spots upon her body, and her eyes screwed shut hiding her own matching pair of watery blues behind dark eyelashes, was the fluttering of her eyelids in tentative, quiet fervor. A loose shudder racked her small frame, jittering through that child's delicate arms as his hands, tiny and frail, remained firmly grasped in tight fists upon the sleeve of her shirt, almost appearing tethered to her side. Just shy of his grip was her own hand, warm reds seeping through knarled fingertips, a thick cut through tattered, beaten clothing severing the fine skin underneath.

Of course, the boy didn't know what to do about that. Any timid attempt to look at it, as if sensing his gaze, the woman would turn on her side, stroking his head of unruly gold before resting upon the ground once more, heaving a tired sigh as distant rambles and rants, along with the fair sound of doors slamming and furniture falling, made her flinch beneath him. His young eyes and ears could only hear and see so much, and for that moment, despite the racket that came barreling towards them for the far hallway behind him, he stayed, though he couldn't deny that inky black that settled in his gut the closer that thumping came, loud, angry words cutting the air around him.

Between the instinctual need, that desperation, to remain with her, to help her, to *stay* with her, stuck with him, manifesting as the crumpling fear that grew nastily behind his eyes and formed as tears that slid lazily down his cheeks, the wish to hide away, far from the loveless, choking shadow that loomed just beyond his view, grew more in each moment that padded listlessly by.

He knew it wouldn't make a difference, his tiny voice amongst the indomitable dark pressing on him as he twisted his head around on slow, reluctant cogs, feeling his resolve wither ever more as those wide eyes looked ever upwards at the towering beast in his midst. His

head, the brain that mulled around his little head, demanded that he shout, scream, defy that crushing black, but his heart, thrumming so wildly in his chest made it so that all he could manage, through his tight throat, were a mess of whimpers and snivels. Perhaps it was the smoke that clung to his nasal passages, filtering a fine layer of mucous and phlegm in his throat, thicker than syrup, more viscous than molasses, dribbling down his nose at the sight of it. At some point, he vaguely realized, he'd begun crying, burning, stinging tears, leaving streaks of cleanliness through the filth of his cheeks. Of course, he made no move to wipe them away, only grasping harder at the sleeve, that dirtied, mottled sleeve tightened and bound in his fists.

It was strange to think that even doing that didn't really comfort him, finding no strength in his voice worth his forcing it through his throat, pitiful cries in his stead. Of course, he tried it, over and over again, even as a yellowed grin stretched across that man's face, gross and wide through the haze of the cigarette between his teeth. Empty eyes looked down, down at his own wary ones, wide and shaken with terror so tangible that he felt his bladder cease, warmth engrossing his pants and soaking into the sullied carpet where he kneeled. Thrum, thrum, his heart pounded and danced between ribs of his own, pressing closer to his mother's body, grasping tighter, ignoring the sensation of her pulling away from him, easing down and away from the deplorable stench that stung his eyes. Singed his eyes, and cloaked him with that twist and turn in his gut; there it was, egging him on, pushing his body and throttling his thoughts to and fro just as calloused hands, contorted and gangly, wriggled free of the bottle that they gripped, that man's smile stock still though he reached down, down towards the boy.

*He was afraid. He knew it well.*

"D-daddy...," He felt no more able to resist it, no more than an insect as the swatter bared down upon them. Just like a fly, he sat there, frozen, breath hitching at the touch of the rough skin to his own; primal, intrinsic, was the desire, still, to stay close to her, though he felt not the power to back any longer, that he resisted, pulling away from him when the man tried to yank him from the floor.

At least he would have if he were strong enough.

Lifted from his rooted place by the force of his father's hand, the safety and sanctity of the murky, muddled carpet, the child couldn't move, couldn't think; all he could think was 'Mommy, Mommy, Mommy', tiny body trembling violently in his father's fists, terror and anxiety made tangible if only by the tremors that racked his form, or the way his eyes remain unblinking, tracking with startling accuracy the black pits that looked into his own.

He couldn't stop it, his heart.

Some odd moments in the midst of this, the child felt faint, barely registering the slow drawl of a laugh from chapped and dark lips before him, head lolling about his shoulders in a dizzy spell.

*But he tried anyway, though the choice wasn't his own. Nothing he said or did would change anything. Nothing at all.*

----- (Allen's Perspective) -----

In that same moment, the man, the beast, watched, fists tight and unrelenting on his tattered. dirtied shirt. It was mildly funny, he

found, in his drunken stupor and listless amusement, how he could scare this kid shitless. Taking into account the state of his wife, casting an idle glance to her unconscious form (or at least it appeared that way; the bitch had an odd way of playing the part of a defenseless when it counted), he felt the trail of a chuckle playing on the wide grin that distorted his features. It was all so comical: the crying, the drama, the boy's feeble attempts to fight back. He knew, all-in-all, the boy was a pussy, a little cunt that pushed when he shouldn't and said too much when no one asked him to. Who could blame him if he had to show the little shit what happened when he dug in things that he shouldn't have?

Thinking back, he didn't it was all that unreasonable to say that he was pissed off. Taking a drag of his cigarette, low and slow before blowing it into the child's face, watching as his little face twisted with distaste at the oily, slick smoke crawling along his features. Tiny coughs, wracking him through the shivers and trembles, parted the clouds of hazy detest guiding his eyes to the ground, tears having stopped through the dryness of his eyes. It looked as though he wanted to say something, he noticed, chuckling, still, but leaving it there.

----- (End)

His look made the child's blood run as cold as ice, those eyes made vacant, the same black abysses that he, as far as he could, recall in recent memory; inky pools that of a mindless animals', waiting and prowling on him.

He didn't understand why, or more like, *couldn't* understand, why.

How could Daddy do this? Why was Daddy *doing* this?

Why did he always look like the monsters that he hid from in closets, from that which hid under a child's bed; every look, every touch, rough and hurtful, always waited and pressed to eat him whole. It hid right there, in the darkest corners of those dark, empty eyes, biding its time to feed and drain him. He was scared, terrified, even, wanting to know most of all if this was his *own* fault.

It had to be, he reasoned through an unconscious voice, distantly wondering if all he could ever do was make the man angry, though with this, he knew that this time that had to be the case. How could it not be when, just behind his reach, the shards of a broken bottle and its contents laid waste on the floor a distance away. It seemed so innocent, placidly lying there, unmoved since this all began; if he hadn't known any better, it wouldn't still be there, wiped up with a napkin and they would all be together, watching tv or playing a game. No angry words, shouting, crying...

No pain.

At least, that's what Kwan would say. Kwan had a nice family that would love him and give him hugs no matter what he did, even if that meant spilling his Daddy's favorite drink.

But he was different. Too different for that to be the case, he reckoned.

All he did was mess up, mess up stuff he didn't need to. That's why his Daddy was doing this, right? That's why he was angry, always angry, because it was all his fault.

All he could do was make stuff worse because he was bad. Always so bad and dumb, so dumb that he would try to get it at all.

*Who else could but him? It was his own fault, and he had known it, too.*

It flooded his senses: tobacco, and alcohol collectively burning themselves into his mouth and nose so profoundly that he reeled back, squinting his eyes to avoid the pungent mist that filtered through his every pore, his every orifice. It felt as though even his blood had curdled, sticking to his veins as the gross substance worked its way through him, biting down his airways and tightening about his lungs. It hurt to move, to think, as was the case when he was near him, the older male's presence making it hard to filter his thoughts.

*That's why he deserved what he got. Why he had earned this.*

Clicking his mouth, the man chortled, each thunderous cackle causing his thick, burly arm to shake, throttling the boy to and fro. Pulling him closer and pushing him into the back wall, further, yet further still, from his away from his mother, that depending void cutting closer, falling deeper. It was quickly becoming harder to hear her breathing, to see her as the hulking shape of the shadow pressed the distance between the two of them. Abruptly, he stopped, letting the boy go, though his thigh blocked him as he leaned down to face the five-year-old, smirking at the reddened cheeks and eyes squeezed shut, mirroring the look of his mother a distance away. The man took out his cigarette and picked at his teeth, wiping orange plaque that had settled onto his nail onto the shirt of the boy, though that didn't work to get a rise out of him. As a matter of fact, none of the jabs or

shoves that he pushed into the child's delicate frame seemed to deter him, much to his irritation.

"Hey, open 'yer eyes, boy. I'm talking to you." No dice. Still, with this, the child made no move to listen, pressing into the wall that cradled his back in objection to what he could feel as the tensing air, little hands gripping his shirt on either side before sliding down to meet the carpet again. He almost cracked at the feeling of a harsh hand pulling at his matted locks, the stark throbbing intense enough to elicit a shrill cry from the boy, but still, he made no move to open his eyes, remembering in his head what his Mother, on a day much quieter than this, told him in his ear like a secret for his ears and his ears alone.

It told him to remain still, remain quiet. Through his closed eyes and pocketed words, he would wait. Wait until the monsters went away, she would tell him as she did the same.

Even when Daddy yelled and screamed and her, she was quiet.

Even when Daddy blamed her for things she didn't do, she was quiet.

Even when Daddy hit her, pushed her, punched her, she was quiet.

His Mommy was always quiet. She was always nice, and kind, even if she didn't always help him.

So why did he want to cry?

Why wouldn't Daddy go away and be nice like she said that he would? Why was he yelling at him, and screaming at him as he did to Mommy even when she closed her eyes?

More tears, burning hot on his pale, dirty cheeks made it hard for him to see, and the snot stuffing up his nose made difficult to breathe. Over and over again, the older man shoved him into the wall, hurting words, awful words, eating up his resolve. It was in those moments that he thought of opening his eyes, bearing the full brunt of his father's eyes upon his own, and though he didn't understand it too well, he knew it would make him happy to see that he had gotten him to do what he wanted.

Then it stopped.

That, too, tempted him to crack them open, just to see what had happened. Then he heard his voice, picking out the coy words even in the encompassing void of the world behind his eyelids. It beckoned him, another plume of suffocating smoke brushing against his face and filling his blood with the choking taste and sticky filth.

*Even though he knew he couldn't do anything, nothing to stop what would happen, he still had to try.*

"Ah, I see whatcha tryin' ta do here..." Pulling out his cigarette, at least, that's what he figured he was doing (since he couldn't see, after all), there were a few quiet moments where felt as though the older man had left, but he knew better, the looming silence breathing overtop of him. It simply sat there, and in that same breath, the boy was confused, but he didn't have much time to mull over it, his father

appearing to turn away, thundering footfalls in steel boots casting a roar through his back and feet, threatening to throw him off balance.

There was rustling, like the fluttering of clothes somewhere beyond his reach, the disgruntled groan of a woman's voice awakening something primal in him; he stopped, listening for the quiet ring of his mother's voice and, though all the same, losing his wish to say the words that danced upon his tongue and played on his lips that quivered with protest.

Be quiet, be still.

Quiet.

Still.

But her voice stirred him, primed him, chancing him a moment's look.

*Yet, even so, his effort was for naught.*

Thankfully, he wouldn't have to fight this desire much longer, his father's voice returning to his ears like knives on a cutting board, grating his senses from the tempting stupor he'd fallen into.

"Thought you had wizened up, huh? Thought you'd follow her lead, huh? The stupid shit she tries to pull, too?" More rustling, more movement, though this time, he could hear something hit another, and a shaken whimper tremble from her lips.

Like a fist to red, blistered skin.

In the black of his non-sight, he couldn't imagine if she was doing the same thing, closing her eyes, being quiet like she told him to.

Maybe she was; who could know?

He was too scared to open his eyes to find out.

"Or...are ya just tryin' to act all big for *this* stupid bitch. That's weird; don't look like she appreciates that too much, do she now? You should see the look on 'er face." This time, there was a squishing, muffled cries from beyond the black chasm that dressed the world around him. Perhaps he had imagined it, maybe his mind had made it up, but he thought he could hear a zipper, and the intensifying struggle of that smaller voice before a hit resounded again, this time silencing it completely except for the stifled sobs somewhere before him.

Be quiet.

Be still.

But what was happening? Over and over, he turned the question within his mind.

The rustling, the shifting of clothes; his heart pounded with fear as the sudden sound of the slaps grew quieter, repeated over and over in his ears, and intuitively, he knew it was something he didn't

understand. Something like...laughter reached him too, even between the sound of skin and the stench of some sweet and sticky twisted his stomach to and fro.

Were...they *laughing*? He could hear them, growling like dogs and making weird sounds...

*There was nothing he could do to change his fate, was there?*

"*Ugh* - boy. Open...open your *goddamn* eyes. See...see what mommy and daddy are really like - fuck!" Daddy was out of breath? What was happening? Why was mommy laughing?

Or was she crying?

What was going on?

All of these questions were unconscious to him, his young curious mind thrusting him forward with curiosity.

Then he opened them, azure blues to the sight before him.

And what he saw only confused him more.

"M-mommy?...Daddy...what are you-" Cut off by his mother, pushing into his father's intensifying thrusts, they hardly minded the wide eyes that laid plastered on them, brimmed with uncertainty as he began to back away. His father looked at him, striking him with those ugly pits for irises, almost appearing to taunt him as he smiled, grunting as he buried himself further in his mother, slapping her back-end with a reverberating snap that shook the child.

What were they doing? What did this mean?

He didn't understand why this was happening, what this was; he wanted to look away, to shut his eyes and close his ears to the sounds and sight of it all.

This...this wasn't something that he liked at all. It was wet and sticky, and the air smelled...nasty. Like old socks, or wet dogs.

*With all of that effort, there was nothing to show for.*

"A-Allen! *Hnnn*...!-"Her handed traveled down, down to the little thing his father was in, and she moved vigorously, laughing, or crying, more as far as he could see. He didn't know what to call that sound; like a laugh and a cry all wrapped in one? He could see tears, trickling down, down hallowed cheeks though her cheeks were flushed with heat.

Then it hit him.

Did it feel...good?

Did mommy and daddy *like* it when they did this?

They must like it when they touched their private parts together and hit each other? They were laughing, right? So they had to, at least; it made sense to him. Why else would they being doing that if it wasn't so?

Wiping his nose on his arm, he watched them finish, finding what he called milk dribbling from beneath his mother as their laughter died down. His father pulled away, pushing the woman off of him before taking her clothes to wipe himself and tossing them back to her a moment later. He didn't however, pull up his pants, his now softened member swinging to and fro before the child; Michael didn't like how it looked.

It looked...weird.

Was that his special place? He thought that Mrs. Snagglesworth said that you weren't supposed to show it to anyone. Was Daddy okay with showing it to a lot of people?

Was that something you did for the people that you loved?

*No matter how he screamed, cried, and begged...*

His mother, too, left unclothed on the ground, but she looked...sad. Again, the child was left perplexed, to say the least. She was laughing just a moment ago, but she didn't look happy? Crawling towards her, he didn't notice the small flinch as he sat in her lap, laying his head upon her shoulder. The woman was silent, turning her head away as small tremors wracked her body just as they did to him not so long ago. Thinking back, he could recall what she had done, what they had shown him; looking at his tiny hand, he could vaguely reason what he thought would be the right choice to make. Taking one last look at his mother, he slid from her lap and onto the carpet beside her, placing one hand upon her thigh before he called her name, a whisper in the now stale air.

"M-mommy? Are you okay? I can make you feel better...," The woman didn't look at him, he knew, but her sobbing stopped, if for just a moment to regard him, even though her voice was short and irritated. Through gritted teeth, she spoke.

*...it did nothing to stave off the terror in his heart.*

"Michael, I don't feel like dealing with you right no-," She could hardly register the sensation of a tiny hand between her legs, shaking and rubbing upon her groin, reaching far enough to stroke the bobbing nub that twitched with desire. A moment passed before she caught them again, those hopeful, bright blue eyes that framed a smile on his lips.

He was...touching her.

And immediately, she felt disgusted. Repulsed by the notion, though...she found herself leaning into the strokes, stifling a moan that played on her lips before she spotted it, that glitter in his eyes as he laughed, too.

What was she doing?

What the fuck was she doing?

"Michael, no! Stop!" It happened so fast, the contact of her hand to his cheek, sending him back a few steps to which Allen remarked with a chuckle, leaning down to pick up his pants from over by the couch.

"Damn, Mira. I mean, gotta give the kid points for trying-" Pausing, the two of them glanced up at the sound of the boy standing and running off to the back rooms, and for a moment, the woman debated going after him but it didn't remain long, resting back on the floor, turning her head where it had been just moments before, though the sensation, the feeling of his touches, didn't cease. It wasn't her fault that he looked, that he couldn't just shut his fucking mouth at times and just not...not...

Sighing, she leaned back upon the dusty couch.

Whatever. He would get over it, sneaking a glance to the room he

had run into, remnants of fine dust swirling and trickling down like rain where he had been, unsettled by his presence, and in her, she thought to herself, unconsciously clamping her legs shut at the thought of it.

What was wrong with that boy?

She couldn't help the flinch moving through her as she saw the older man stomp by, those padding footfalls blaring beside her before dying off in the direction that her son had gone, the small room that he had been allotted. There was the vague sense of duty that burned in her, almost that of an obligation to say something, anything; that was her job, her lot in life.

To protect that boy for as long as she could, right? Her...her only son.

That was the path that she chose, what she thought she had wanted (what motherhood was supposed to be)...but in those moments before, where she had been lying there as her husband antagonized Michael, she couldn't honestly say that she had wanted to be in his place. As she laid there, she could be made to be left alone, to not be hit for a few minutes.

To know that someone else could do that for her...well...

The sound of Allen's footsteps were quickly fading out to the sound of the television as he neared the back of the rancher. Her heart lilted, thrumming with anticipation at the prospect of her taking another shot for him, but it died out on still lips that pursed and formed a fine line upon her bruised face. Leaning back, the hand that had begun to

reach out as if to touch the older man was lowered, grazing her side before she stood up, though not quickly, a dull throb of her backside hindering her movements.

Gazing at the television, she didn't bother putting her underwear back on and took a seat, though not moving to change the channel, knowing that Allen would be back soon.

If anything, she reminded herself quietly, this was the kid's own fault.

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In the back room, a small hand cradled a stinging cheek, plastered shock and disbelief etched so deeply into his features that he could hardly stand to breathe, the stench just beyond the door reminding him of whence he'd come. At least here, amongst the layers of dust that appeared to paint everything white, fluttering gently on wistful air currents before landing on the small blankets that had been laid flat upon the murky carpet, did he feel as though he could think. Though he reminded himself, pushing further into the corner furthest from the door (the one he always chose), he shouldn't make too much noise, but it was hard to remain quiet when the new budding of tears forced a hiccup from his throat, the child trying his hardest to silence the sniffles that resonated from him.

It made his heart hurt, his head ache; moving his other hand, the one that he had used to touch Mommy, his watery blue orbs skated over the surface of it, minding not the tremble the wavered through it or

the weird water and white speckles that slid between his fingers. What had he done wrong, he wondered, crumpling into the odd corner he'd looked to first before collapsing into it, turned to face a wall that was similar to that he'd been near before. Splintered wood breathed around his arms, grazing them and leaving light scratches upon the pale surface, though the child hadn't noticed. Not beyond the now dull sting of his cheek left a brazen red or the hurt that lied within him.

It was supposed to make Mommy happy, it was supposed to make her laugh; that's what Daddy did and she was. That was the most he had ever seen her look like that, though he still didn't quite understand why there was so much stuff coming from her mouth; was that what happened when someone was super happy? He couldn't remember ever doing that when he laughed, but there was that one time when Kwan and Dale were making really funny jokes, and he had laughed so hard that milk came out of his nose. Thinking back on it, it wasn't so fun when he had to help clean it up, but that's the closest that he, in recent memory, could recall looking a little bit how Mommy did.

So why was it when Daddy did it, did she laugh and look happy?

Another idea struck him.

Taking his other hand, the one that had been nursing his reddened cheek, he pulled at the helm of his sweatpants, still smelling of urine but he didn't mind so much. He didn't have any trouble doing so, since his underwear often didn't fit and were loose. There were many times that he had to go to the nurse to get new underwear when the other kids said mean things about how he smelled. Even Ms. Lulamoon, the nurse, didn't like the smell, once asking where he had gotten his clothes, recalling that he had told her that his mom went to a funny place called 'the garbage' to find him clothes and stuff.

Mommy and Daddy weren't happy to know that he had told someone that, but he didn't know that it was supposed to be a secret. From then on, he made sure to never tell anyone anything; his arm sometimes still hurt from the place Mommy had hit him when she found out.

He said he was sorry.

He forgot that he wasn't supposed to say anything, that Mommy and Daddy had made his promise.

Through the many holes in the tiny fabric, he could spot his own special place, lying limp against his inner thigh.

...

...

...

Maybe...maybe if he put his in Mommy, she would be happy then?

Just like Daddy did.

He didn't know why, but the look on her face was...happy. But something else shimmered below the surface, though he couldn't name it.

...

...

But...

His looked...smaller...than Daddy's?

Standing up, pulling his own pants and underwear, he left his bottom half bare and uncovered. Looking down, he poked it, giggling at the weird sensation that it brought. It sort of tickled, he thought, going to poke it again and again before taking his index finger and stroking it, surprised to see that after a bit, it looked different, that it had grown and pulsed with each touch.

"It's a...balloon?" Quietly, he pondered, poking at the engorged member with fascination before stroking it again. Was this why they laughed? He wanted to laugh too, he found, noticing that it felt like fine feathers, like someone had grazed one over his member, though he couldn't deny how it felt funny, wrong, and it made him confused. It was then that a cough from the doorway of the room caught his attention, Allen bordering on the frame of the door, a newly lit cigarette in one hand and a bottle of liquor in the other. For a split second, seeing the bottle in his hand, the child considered why his Daddy was mad in the first place.

If he had another...then...no.

It was his fault.

Always his fault.

He should be happy that Daddy could find another one to drink; he liked them so much, it wasn't very frequent that he was seen without one, so of course he would be mad, who wouldn't be?

However, it wasn't a moment later that he looked down at himself and remembered what he had been doing.

Quickly, the child went to cover the privates, the echo of Mrs. Snagglesworth's voice whistling between his ears, knowing full well he wasn't supposed to let anyone see his no-no place. To this, the older man chuckled, taking a swig of his drink before stomping over to the boy, long strides as he always tended to do, and took a seat on the blankets, splaying out his feet so that his stained underwear could bear the light, opening himself up to the boy.

For a few moment, the man motioned to the large bulge, stroking the print of his member gingerly as a placid smile stretched his features wide.

Michael still didn't move or remove his hand, even chancing turning away from his father, but that didn't last when the older man's voice called to him, booming over the mantra that had paid their time in his head.

"Found you kinda like that, huh? You like touchin' it, don't you?" To this, the child still for a bit before he reluctantly nodded his head, though he was still trying to discern how he felt about it. Sure, it felt funny, he thought, but why did it feel so...weird? More than that, he couldn't shake the feeling that his father wasn't supposed to be looking.

"I know I do...I do it all of the time." Sliding a hand into his boxers, the older man hitched his breath as he stroked himself a few times, having placed the bottle beside him for a moment, but didn't progress further as he watched his son's express shift and change, somewhere between confusion and fear as he cupped his meager length. Allen, placing his cigarette between his teeth, beckoned for the boy to come to him, and despite his reservations, the child, feet padding softly upon the carpet and to the spot beside his father. Still covering himself, they sat like this for a few moments before Allen spoke again, eyes firmly trained on the small hands that hid away his now softened member, licking his lips before parting them to speak.

"...You wanna feel good, right? You like the way touchin' it makes you feel, don't you?" Removing his hand from his pants, the man takes his bottle in his grip once more, taking another gulp of the toxic liquid, though his eyes never left boy. Michael considered the thought for a moment.

It did feel...good, right?

The tickling made his feel strange, sick even, but it didn't feel...bad.

At least...he didn't think so.

Nodding as he stood there, the boy didn't look up, eyes tracking the fine dust that lingered in the low light before his eyes, flinching as Allen clicked his teeth.

He knew that meant Daddy didn't like something. That he had said or done the wrong thing.

"So what are ya hidin' it for? No reason to do that for me. Not unless you don't want me to see it. Is that it, huh? You don't want to me see it?" Taking a drag of his cigarette, the man rested back on his free hand, moving his cigarette from between his lips and putting it out on the carpet, moving to bite back and stomp at the small flame that appears once it had made contact with the muddy fabric. His now free hand moved to pull away at the child's hand, though he was peeved to find that the younger of the two flinched, subtly pulling away until his back was turned to his father, though Michael didn't miss the irritated click of the former's teeth again. Quickly, he tried to recover from the situation, feeling the air almost constrict with tension.

"M-Mrs. Snagglesworth told us that this was a s-special place, Daddy. You're not supposed to look unless someone wants you to-...," For a moment, nothing happened, that is, until a large, calloused hand fell upon his shoulder, turning him to face the yellow sneer of the older man.

"Oh yeah? Is that what she told you? That your dick is special or somethin'? Bullshit. Fuckin' bullshit. Let me show ya somethin', boy." Moving to take the hand from his crotch once more, he encountered little resistance before he forced it from him, yanking his two small hands away, revealing what he thought was amusing. Snaking his second hand around to touch it, stroking his tip, the older man grinned at the tiny squirm the child made in response, and he noticed that his mouth ran agape, like a fish out of water wishing for another breath.

"D-Daddy...you're not supposed to-," The sound of a hand slicing through the air and colliding with his opposite cheek almost appeared to silence the air itself, following in short by the beginnings of a sob, the child cupping the other side where the start of a bruise

had appeared just as quickly. Going back to stroke the younger, the older man stopped and grabbed a fistful of his hair, dark, empty eyes again staring into woeful blues.

"I've already *told* you to shut the fuck up about it, didn't I? Ms. Snaggletits or whatever her fuckin' name is doesn't know shit about anything, so why don't you keep your mouth *shut* for once. You should be glad that I'm even doing this for you, so be grateful." Thrusting the child's head back as he released his mess of blonde hair, his freed hand grasped at his member, applying light strokes upon despite the quiet cries of the former.

As annoying as it was, the older man regarded the child in the midst of it, eying him as the sobs died down and a conflicted, twitching frown broke out on his features, the child unconsciously rocking his hips to the rhythm of the large, rough hand that slid over his member. Hell, he could feel his own cock beginning to press against the fabric of his underwear, going to rub at his own as it tented towards his hand once more. Smirking, he increased his pace before stopping abruptly, leaning down to take the child's length in his mouth, much to the confusion of Michael who had since yelped in surprise and fear.

What was happening to him? What was Daddy doing? He didn't...he didn't like this at all, but it felt...good? But it also hurt?

Hot, burning tears brimmed the corners of his eyes as the feeling that he would burst, unable to stop the strange laugh-cry that was coming out of his mouth, forced past his throat in short, heaving breaths as the feeling grew ever stronger.

Then his father released him, tendrils of clear fluid dribbling from his

tip and onto the blanket beneath them, the bursting, tight sensation dying down. He flinched as his father took one more roundabout with his tongue around the softened member, licking his lips to take in each and every morsel in his mouth. Michael needed a moment to collect whatever thoughts that he could muster, though that proved to be a harder task than he thought it would be, whimpering as his father stood, having since closed his eyes, welcoming the encompassing dark. He likely would have stayed there, if not for the tap on his stinging, bruised cheek, forcing his eyes open to the sight of his father's own cock, dripping a weird, clear fluid the child didn't know that name of that looked a lot like his own, down his face and onto his blankets.

From here, it looked scary and strange, pulsing and twitching before him as veins ran about the shaft, but Allen's words caught his attention, however, distracted as he may have been.

"It made you feel good, didn't it? When you were touched down there? When I put it in my mouth?" Through his tears, the child thought about it for a moment, and if he were honest, he didn't know how it felt, how he should feel. It made him laugh, it tickled, kind of, but it also hurt? Was it supposed to feel that way? Was it supposed to tickle *and* hurt? Looking up his impossibly tall Father, the child nodded, though still unsure of what he thought. He didn't know if he liked it or not, but seeing his Daddy smile when he said that almost made his insecurities melt away, knowing that he could get him to be happy like this. The older man pumped his own length, letting loose that weird growl the child had heard earlier.

"Good, because now it's your turn. Now you're gonna make me feel good." Michael didn't understand.

He was supposed to do what Daddy did to him? A few moments

passed, though the child could see that he was getting angry.

"You want me to put it in my mouth, Daddy?" He didn't know why, but something about this felt...bad.

Really, really bad.

Backing away, he didn't get far until his father's hand yanked at his arm, pulling him back before pressing it against his face, the throbbing tip smearing its contents upon his face; the sharp ache of his face resounded full force as the man brought him closer, leaning down to whisper into his ear.

"Yes, you little shit, I do. That's what you're supposed to do; didn't you know that? It would be bad if you said no since I did it for you. That's what you're supposed to do for the people you care about. Not unless...you don't care about me?" Inching his member closer to the child's mouth, Allen watched him for a moment, seeing if he would follow suit. Michael eyed the stiffened object with emotions the older man couldn't place, but it didn't matter much, he figured, deciding in that same breath that he would try something different. He would do it, one way or another.

"You...you are? Does it make you happy, Daddy? I don't want you to be mad; I do care about you! I can make you happy? This will make you laugh? Like Mommy did?" Allen chuckled, giving a quick look to the disjointed woman just a room over. It was weird; for a moment there, he wondered if she knew what he was doing.

Whether she gave a fuck at all.

Not that it made a difference to him.

He'd have his way regardless if she did or not.

"Yeah, when I'm fuckin' Mommy in her ass damn right it makes me happy. It makes Mommy happy, too. Even if she isn't willing to admit it." In her butt? Michael knew what that word meant and thought that was pretty funny, even if he didn't know what 'fucking' meant. Was that what they did? They liked...fuckin'?

"You and Mommy like to fuck? You do it because it feels good? It tickles?" Looking down at himself, you poked at his own member, limp once more.

It didn't feel like anything.

"Pretty much. That's all there is to it. Now, you want *me* to feel good, don't you? I want to, so you wouldn't say no to that, would you?" Tipping his hand beneath his chin and pointing his head upwards, back to its initial position, the child nodded silently, not taking his eyes off of the object pressing painfully into his sore cheek, and the man didn't take his eyes off of his mouth, slightly agape but not wide enough to fit it in. Taking his free hand, Allen pulled down on his lower jaw, widening his mouth a bit before the child, once again, pulled back, tears brimming in his eyes.

'Not this shit again...,' The older man's mind mused irritably, biting back the urge to shove it down his throat. The last thing he wanted

was the little asshole using teeth on his precious cargo, shivering at the thought.

"I'm s-scared, Daddy. It's too big-" Snapping his head up, the older man's face was less kind, less open, worn with agitation as his cock throbbed with need against his face. He wanted to help Daddy, he wanted to make him laugh; it's just that knot in his belly, thick and twisted with fear, that was making it hard to move. For a moment, the older man considered forcing it in, but he stopped, breathing a tired sigh, knowing that would chance the little shit biting down, and he couldn't chance another kid kicking the bucket this soon.

What else would he have to play with?

Smiling, Allen peered down, catching the child's eyes.

"Scared? For what? It's just like...just like a lollipop. You like candy, dontcha?" A little smile appeared on his lips, nodding vigorously at the question.

Even though Mommy and Daddy never bought candy, Mrs. Snagglesworth always brought it to class when they were good, and sometimes, Kwan would give him some if he didn't do good in class. He wasn't always good at school (the work was really hard), but Kwan and his friends would always try to cheer him up. His favorite were the little cups of peanut butter with the chocolate on top; he would have to ask Mrs. Snagglesworth what the name of it was since he'd forgotten.

He wasn't too good at remembering things, either.

"Like candy? I love candy!" Beaming, he hadn't noticed the older man slowly pulling his member towards his gleaming teeth, smiling back with reddened, dark gums, and yellow teeth of his own, though that smile couldn't be further from genuine.

"You do, don't you? Then there should be no reason why you won't love this. Just remember one thing-," Leaning forward and pressing his mouth to one of his ears, he spat ",...if you bite down or stop at any point, I'll beat the ever-living *shit* outta you, understand, boy?" The child froze, stock still as the man leaned back up, smile having returned.

"Well, what are you waiting for? Go slow, you know, get used to it, then you do what I did. Get a *taste* for it, heh." Michael wanted to stay just like this, hair raising and bristling in the absent breeze, but he knew his father wouldn't be happy if he did. Staring down the shaft, he opened his mouth to allow his tongue passage, sticking out the appendage to swipe along the tip itself. It tasted funny, he thought, scrunching up his features up the smell and texture of it. Looking back up, he half-wished that he had closed his eyes again, the peeved expression of his father more than enough to make him swallow his doubts and do it again, even as the taste didn't subside on his tongue.

'Like rotten eggs!' The child voiced to himself, taking in a bit more of the tip but being extra careful to watch his teeth. Licking more vigorously, his stomach lurched with quiet joy at the sounds his father was making. It told him he was doing a good job, that he liked it, and with that, he chanced to take in more of it, though it hurt to keep his mouth open that wide, he did it anyway. The stench of sweat and must filled his nostrils as he went about the tip, jumping as that calloused hand took his head and pushed him to his father's crotch, retching through each thrust and brush of the end of his

father's member to the back of his throat.

Moaning, Allen could feel the pressure building, building until he couldn't help but grasp at the child's head and release into the cavity, not acknowledging the desperate struggle around his cock.

'Fuck, that felt good,' The man uttered under his breath, holding the boy there as the last of his seed sputtered from his tip. He could hear him, his racking sobs through the way it hummed around his softened appendage, thinking that, despite having just finished, how he could almost work up another erection if not for the fatigue that set over him at that moment. Pushing the child to the floor, Allen pulled up his underwear, and regarded the former with an empty expression, having grown bored of their exchange.

"And don't you spit it out, either. Swallow *all* of it. Each and every drop, ya hear? It would make me even happier if you did." It wasn't exactly a lie, he reckoned. All the times in the past that he saw the other kids he'd *"played with"* swallow 'him', it gave him something strange. A warm, tingly sort of feeling, though that could have just him getting hard...again. Michael, through his tears, did just that, choking back the thick, bitter sludge until nothing was left in his mouth, gazing up hopefully at his father, a wavering, jittery smile breaking across his features. He had to have done a good job if his Daddy was smiling, and he was, though the look was odd, he thought, nothing like the happiness he saw earlier.

It looked...meaner?

"I won't, Daddy! S-see? Did I...did I do a good job?" Holding open his mouth, the child caved into discomfort as nothing was said, Allen ignoring the question with a turn and a grab of his bottle as he left

out of the room, leaving the child, once again, on the murky carpet in the musty, dusty air of the backroom, not bothering to acknowledge him further, though he did stop and look back.

"See? That wasn't that hard, was it? But next time...," Looking forward, the man stepped forward.

"...do better." With that, he left

Was that it?

Had...had he done something wrong?

He thought...he thought he had done a good job, but maybe...just maybe...he didn't.

Something in him wanted to chase after him, to grab at his shirt, to pull him back just to hear that laugh again, to have him smile like that again. Oddly enough, Michael couldn't even tell what the man had been feeling in the moments after he had left, his little heart pounding with fear and apprehension, the tang of salt of sweat on his lips not helping the sickening flips that his stomach had been doing the very moment he had swallowed. On that, he clicked his mouth, whimpering at the beginning of a tummy ache; he hated when this happened, knowing that they could come out of the blue. They always happened when he felt scared or angry, like now, as he crawled back to his corner, huddling close to the splintered wall with a dejected drag of his feet, making no move to wipe the crusting substance around his mouth.

It didn't taste like candy at all.

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## 2. Another Day Begins

**Summary for the Chapter:**

> Waking up from his dream, his memory, Michael (though he rarely goes by that name nowadays) needs to make it to school.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.
>
> To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)
>
> Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.
>
> Thank you.

Weary eyes snapped open to the low light of a musty smell, meeting the ceiling with bleary regard that didn't match the warm breaths of light that filtered in from the singular window above him. Illuminated buds of dust and fine granules of fuzz and dirt danced on the open air, almost appearing to exchanged heartful dances in lost whirls just beyond his head. From the spot on the floor, amongst the strewn bottles and waste, he could already tell that it would a long day.

From his parent's room, a television spoke its meaningless words in tandem with the birds' song; as if combating the bored drone of the man, they tweeted and lilted beyond which could be seen . He could spot in his parent's room, from his spot on the ground, the meteorologist deliver news of another bout of bad weather, confirmation of his earlier suggestion. The jubilant tones of the birds would have been nice, he figured, listening to them as small buds of water formed at his eyes, if the realization that he had to go to school hadn't dawned on him at a moment's notice. However, it was early mornings such as these, in the absence of the shouting and anger that rang like insects between his ears, the familiarity of the turmoil that laid the foundation for his home, it was stranger, still, that it wasn't the case now.

The quiet was different, nice, even, and it would have stayed that way, had it not been for the nasty mutters that coursed through his mind with each passing moment.

He couldn't quite recall when they started, the sounds and voices that he would hear all of the time. From what he could tell, closing his eyes for a moment as if to strain for the sound of the birds' songs, they began to get louder and louder when he was much younger, though he couldn't remember exactly when; once a rare edition to the things that he would think about during the day-to-day. Occasionally they would chime in, and though they rarely ever responded when he talked back to them, they were really...chatty. Most of the time it was simple things, observations that he, frankly, didn't need them to make (he could, at the very least, notice when he needed a chair at the desk, or that he had missed the homework or something). Admittedly, as a child, it was sort of nice having these weird little people in his head, whispering to him and telling him things that no one else could hear.

As far as he was concerned, everyone had them, you know? Little friends that went with you everywhere that you did, ate everything

that you did, saw everything that you did.

He'd even named them at some point, though looking back on it now, it was sort of strange that he did that, he found. Even so, he had been fond of them: Lisa, the motherly but bitter one, Andrew, the nicer but still sort of mean father-like one, Jason, the little brother-ish one (though he felt that it was a bit more than that, he could never quite put his finger on it. There were others, lots of them in fact, but most of the time, they all blended into white noise that he had trouble making sense of or separating into their own voices.

Just constant noise that critiqued, commented, or mused about every little thing that he did.

And he *fucking* hated them.

Sighing, he could hear them now, becoming louder and louder before they worked their way to the forefront of his mind, muttering and mumbling about something or other until they almost seemed to pick up on the wetness of his eyes, the pursing of his lip; as if reading his mind, they spoke in tandem, one after the other.

**'Oh, dear. Another dream? Another bad dream, sadly.**

**'Stop fuckin' crying about it, you little bitch. Get over it!'**

**'...okay? Are you okay? You'll be fine...'**

Others chimed in, saying this about him crying, a few others calling him names, taunting him about what had...happened.

Michael had learned a long time ago (wait, he was Dash. Dash, for fuck's sake!) that listening to the voices all the time wasn't good for him. They had a way of coming at the wrong time, or worse than that, never leaving at all. They were always rude, perhaps even cruel.

Sometimes, it was difficult to discern whether or not he what he was thinking was really him...or them.

Of course, he was curious.

The teen could recall the feel times that he had talked to Kwan and a few others about it, though he never referenced himself, for some reason feeling particularly self-conscious but all-the-more curious about whether this was normal, if he should be worried; all things that he didn't know, along with many more that he found himself asking about but never got answers to.

Most of the time, the answer was the same.

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- (A few years back) -

"Dude, voices in someone's head? That's really cool!" Of course, they were in middle school at the time, right when the voices had started to get a bit...mean. Dash would have been flattered if the same voices that rested between his ears didn't tell him to do things so much, or if they were just a bit nicer...

Maybe...maybe it wouldn't be so bad then. Or...if he could turn them off sometimes. Especially when he felt really sad...well, nevermind.

It didn't work that way.

It's better not to hope for things that couldn't be.

Just as Mommy always said.

With a turn of his head to voice before him, he'd realized that Kwan had said that, not that he was surprised, really. He was always going about the brain and stuff, how "fascinating" it was, even when he, personally, couldn't see the appeal. Thinking about his own, he didn't understand how anyone would ever want that be the case, though, the boy thought with bitterness, he guessed if you didn't have to hear so much noise, so many things, all of the time, you wouldn't really have to worry about it too much, you know? You could just admire it without knowing how hard it could be sharing your thoughts with other people.

It was easier looking from the outside-in, rather than the inside-out, and that couldn't be more true as more of the kids around him, Dale, Star, and Paulina, chimed in, speaking their piece about what the former had said. Sipping her juice box, Paulina doubled back

dramatically, tossing it over her head as she crossed her arms to pout.

"Cool? What about that could possibly be cool?! I don't think so; I've heard that the voice thingies tell people to do weird stuff like dig up their nose or even *kill* people!People like that are freaks!" To that, Star, her most trusted confidant, squealed, ducking behind Dale that had just finished his own sandwich, licking his fingers before lifting a suspicious eyebrow. Clicking his teeth, Dash couldn't stifle the violent reflex that throttled his body as his eyes tracked the former before remembering where he was in embarrassment. Perhaps he'd ignored it, or simply didn't notice it, digging through his bag to fish out his potato chips, cracking them open, and taking out a bit of them, tossing them into his mouth as he spoke.

"Kill people? I don't believe you. If that were the case, wouldn't more people listen to them? Like, wouldn't there be more killers *walking* around? I think so since they are always talking or whatever, you know?" No one said anything for a bit, what, with Paulina and Star thoroughly spooked (it didn't take much), Dale reeling from his last comment, Kwan rummaging through his own things to find something (a book, Dash could guess), and Dash caught in his own thoughts.

A killer? He'd never...he'd never thought about hurting anyone else, he thought, though a sudden itch of his arm made him pull his sleeve further down, making sure to hide the bandages that scaled the length of both of his arms. It was always them that wanted to do that sort of thing, he reminded himself, remembering the darker words that had been uttered at some points in regards to the students around him. The boy refused to acknowledge them, trying his very best to silence them, but sometimes, just sometimes, things slipped through.

They always started as small things, tiny things.

The occasional command to hit others, to bite, to kick; he could be playing on the playground when he would suddenly be compelled to trip someone that had been going by just because he could. Every time they did that, he would be confused, unable to surmise where that had come from, why he would *want* to do something like that. It just seemed so natural, so *right* at the moment...he recalled the times that he had actually followed through. Watching blankly as the voices would be quieted for just a moment when he did those sorts of things as if appeased before picking up again. Their bloodied noses, frayed hair, tearful faces; it made him tingle, it made him feel...good. When asked by the teachers if he had done it one purpose, some combination of the voices telling to remain silent, to say no, to lie, and the fact that he would follow through without hesitation...

...that's what scared him the most.

He hated that he did that, so he had to do something about them. Or...at least what he thought that he could.

After a while, he would learn to identify them, their little whispers as they listened and watched him play from the recesses of his mind. At times, they were just there, talking on and on about nothing here and nothing there, things that he could ignore so long as he just didn't sit still (part of the reason he was such an...unpopular student, he figured, knowing that squirming and tapping on your desk was annoying, but he just couldn't stop it. It was easier to be frowned at by others than to be left alone with his thoughts). He could almost always pick it out, the nasty words, the mean thoughts, that would pass through him like a knife through butter, both about him and the students and peers he had gotten to know so well.

Ones that would want him to hurt others, to do...bad things.

But most of the time...they wanted him to hurt himself, though, he couldn't blame them completely.

However, they seemed to know what he wanted, what he liked and was ashamed of.

After a while, he could quiet his urges, too, or at the very least, ignore them, but there were a few things that would...sort of bring that out of him, and with it, tha twinge of shame from his inability to suppress it around a particular dark-haired youth in his 1st class, a flash of baby blue eyes clouding his vision before turning back to his friends.

What he wanted to do to him...

How he wanted to...

Nevermind.

He wasn't supposed to think like that. Not about other boys.

"Look! I have a book filled with all sorts of mental illness, and one of the case studies about schizophrenia (that he later explained was a

condition recorded to cause many auditory delusions, visual delusions, and hallucinations) was that of many occasions of murder! He said *'the voices made me do it'*, but I think that there was more to the story." Dash perked up, having since deflated knowing that someone else that sounded like him was, of course, a murderer, though he continued to look intently at his friend who'd, at this point, begun to flip through the case study, skimming over many words, many pages, until his finger tracked down the page and found what he was looking for.

Dale had since gotten up, kicking stones, looking thoroughly bored, but at the word "murder", he was back on the bleachers of the football, overtaking Paulina and Star who'd retreated further back and knocking over their colored beadings, sticking out their tongues and voicing annoyed protests as they scrambled to pick up the scattered beads of their friendship bracelets from the ground and bleachers around them. Flopping back onto the seats next to them, Dash couldn't help how his body froze, grasping the seat so tightly that his knuckles turned white.

It was just Dale.

Just Dale.

Not...not Daddy.

"Shortly after his arrest, Richard Merkins, aged 37 at the time, was found guilty on all twenty-six counts of serial rape and murder of Massachusetts females and males, all between the ages of thirteen to eighteen. He was later found to have been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, amongst other disorders, and was sent for treatment at the McLean Hospital of Psychiatry in Belmont, Massachusetts, where he later committed suicide via strangulation." What? Wasn't he

supposed to be helping Dash out, not making him look to be a weirdo creep? This definitely wasn't something that he hadn't wanted to hear. This...this only made him want to crawl under the bleachers, biting his lip as the musing of the voices, louder now that his heart had begun pounding.

Would he turn out like that? Old, disgusting, and dead?

He...he didn't want to think about it. His young, thirteen-year-old mind didn't wish to consider that possibility.

But Kwan wasn't finished.

"See, now this is just a classic case of poor management. He should have been watched way more closely, and him having loose bedsheets during the day was a no-go. If that were me-" Dale cut him off with a firm hand, smirking as he placed his hands in his pockets.

"You would have what? Stuck him in a little box and watched him all day? We've all seen what you write in science, nerd." Dale had a point, and Dash knew it, too.

Kwan was smart.

Really smart.

Smarter than anyone he knew.

Despite the former's reluctance to show it, they all knew he knew it, too.

Straight A's and loved by all of the teachers, he was everything that Dash *wished* he could be. To this, Kwan blushed, subtly grasping his bag and placing it between his legs; Dash figured that the journal in question rested somewhere in that pristine pouch he always had. He knew that for a fact, spotting the edges of the marbled notebook that the other always seemed to have with him, marked to the brim with observations, notes, and whatever else smart people like him thought to write down. Looking back at his own tattered, beat-up bag, he could only spot a single, mottled blue notebook, left empty and unused.

He couldn't help the bitter twinge that nicked him deep in his heart.

His perfection, his intellect, his...prettiness.

It made him sick.

"No, absolutely not. That would be unethical! I would simply do a collection of rudimentary observations, tests, and trials to access the extent of his apparent paranoid schizophrenia, as well as try to ascertain the potential presence of other psychotic disorders that may be listed as co-morbid and contribute to his erratic behavior. That way, we could find the best way to rehabilitate him!" No one said anything for a moment, taken aback.

Co-morbid? Un-ethi-what? Too many big words. None of that made sense to him. Pulling up his legs and resting his chin upon his knees, Dash pondered it for a moment before giving up, knowing full well that there was no way that he would ever be able to understand whatever it was that he had said, but it sounded cool. He did understand one thing, the part that they would rehabilitate him; so Kwan thought that they could make him better if they just...worked hard enough?

That they could fix someone that had done really terrible things because their mind didn't work right and that with enough care, they could be...normal (or as close to normal as someone like *them* could be)?

That even if he were a freak...he could live a regular life?

Thinking about that himself, he chuckled, hoping that they could say the same for him.

That someone like could be fixed at all.

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- (Present Day) -

Regardless, he could agree with the voices for one reason, and that it

didn't matter, that the dream didn't mean anything.

That dream, that memory, was just a thorn in his side that he was stuck with. That he should just get over it already and move on, right?

If anything, he should be happy, glad that Daddy had showed him that.

He was only to help him, and for him to be thinking like this, it just went to show how ungrateful he was.

It was a good thing.

So why?

So why did it make him feel so...dirty? It weighted in his chest like a mound of lead, making breathing a task in itself, pressing on his lungs as deftly as the demon he felton his chest at night. It turned in his stomach, gurgling with nausea at the taste of his father's-

Bolting up from his spot on the floor, unfurling the knotted, scraggly blankets from his body as he cupped shaky hands over his mouth, gagging and retching violently at the thought. It was so clear in his mind, the sensation of choking, the fullness, but...that was how things had always been, how they were supposed to be, right...

Yes, that's right.

He'd tasted it many, many times before, the voices helpfully reminded him, smiling bitterly as they reviewed the details of it, the choking sensation, the thick seed that slid down his throat with each exchange that they had made, and the many others that he had encountered, each one tasting slightly different. So many, all just as familiar as the next, so shouldn't he be used to it? It was how things were meant to be. He was supposed to feel sticky and unclean, his throat dry and salty. He...didn't know any other way. Yet, despite this, the emotions gripped him, so tangible that it made his stomach twist and turn in protest, and for those moments where he sat on the musty, filthy floor, it felt indistinguishable from the dream. That same, small child that watched his parents, and...and...

God, he was gonna fucking puke.

Sweat drenched him head-to-toe, and that burning bile swam up his throat, bubbling so intensely in his esophagus that he feared that the bitter substance would slip from between his lips for he could stop himself, the acidic sludge coating his tongue that pressed desperately to the roof of his mouth. But he knew this feeling, this track that led only downward from here, so he did the only thing that he knew how to.

He rocked.

Steady beats as he laid seated there on the floor, screwing tired, blue eyes shut so tightly that bursts of color erupted behind his eyelids from the strain, but that didn't matter. Despite the taunting of the voices in the background, many others that he didn't recognize and some that he did, calling out his name, insulting him, laughing, he

whispered with desperate huffs to himself, his body trembling uncontrollably as he struggled to level his voice.

"...okay...I-I'm okay...I...I'm okay..." He hated when this happened.

It was like the room around was folding, the room to hot, his chest unable to move.

He tried not to think about so much, but when this happened, whatever this was called, he didn't always know how to stop it. Over time, though his breathing was still erratic, he could feel his heart begin to lull and steady, easing to a soft patter that helped to deepen the breaths that had been shallow pants just moments ago. He didn't really feel altogether there, the icky, oily ghost touches of sickness sting making him feel ill, but casting a slow, pensive glance to the clock a fair distance away, above the kitchenette to his right, he knew that he couldn't wait any longer. Even when his body begged him to be still.

Daddy wouldn't be happy.

Not when he could hear them stirring just a room over.

This wasn't the first time that this had happened.

That first time bristled to his mind, shimmers of embarrassment making him want to burrow it deeper than he had before as the image of him in tears, covered in his own piss, came to mind.

Looking back, he couldn't have any older than ten at the time. He didn't even know what had happened, even to this day. Up until that point, he thought that he had felt fine, if a bit on edge, you know? He'd gotten in trouble again (no homework, as usual), and the end of the day was drawing near. When report cards would come out, and he would have to take it home.

Facing how his father would react.

How...how angry he would be...and that...scared him.

Really scared him, actually.

One moment he was in the chair, laughing, having fun, then...fear.

Pure, unadulterated fear, pouring over him and filling his every muscle, bone, and corner of his mind until nothing was left.

It was like...like the world had fallen down around him, and he had no clue which pieces of it he should pick up first. Like everything that made sense faded away, and that all he had left was the vague sense of falling and falling, ever downward.

It didn't stop there.

Whatever it did, that fear, he couldn't stop crying, shaking, curled up in a ball in the middle of the room, and on the floor no less. He could still feel them: the points and laughter of his classmates, the confusion of his teacher. At some point, a male teacher must have come in and tried to help him, which, again, wasn't something he should have freaked out for, you know? Like, how fucking stupid could you be for pissing on yourself when they went to touch you?

God, even just thinking about it pissed him off, though it was mostly at himself.

Not the person that came to help him. It wasn't their fault.

They couldn't help it if he was weird.

It wasn't until he peeled himself off of the floor, covered in piss, sweat, and tears, did he realized what was happening, and honestly, he wasn't sure how his younger self could have dared to look into the faces of his peers from then on. He wasn't sure that if something like that happened today would he be able to bounce back like that. Not when, for almost a month afterward, did people avoid him, pointing and walking away before he catch up to them. Even his friends didn't want to be near him for a while, but really, he couldn't blame them. They did what anyone would do, and they avoided the freak.

How could he fault them for that?

He just couldn't let that happen again. If...if he needed to be like that, then he would do it where no one could see him.

Where no one would see him cry, though, he reminded himself briskly, crying was for the weak, the soft.

He didn't have a reason to cry for.

He was...he was fine.

Just fine.

He could still hear their collective snores from the other room, his parents' room, one deep and reverberating, the other light and airy, which sometimes made him afraid that she would just...stop breathing in her sleep at some point. Dash tried not to think about it, but...it was difficult not to. Despite everything, he still...cared about her.

Even if she hated him sometimes.

He figured he deserved that, too. If anything, he would be happy to help her, to take the fall for her.

That was the least that he could do.

Anything to make her look at him, for her to...to love him.

That's all he wanted.

He stands and begins his ritual, but he freezes for a moment. Beneath his foot, something cracked, its strange cry appearing to ring out for the entire development to hear. The teen debated not lifting his foot at all, knowing full well the sound wasn't quite finished yet, but he could feel the time idling by, not to mention the pressing bite of a late slip and imminent detention peeling away at his resolve before he picked up his foot. Staring at the spot from whence it came, there lied a single syringe, spilled contents dark and bubbling beneath the sole of his shoe. Stock still, he listened, acute ears privy to each and every sound that was made from as far as he could stretch them. Gazing tentatively to the paneled door that remained ajar just outside of his reach, it was to his relief that, after releasing the breath that he had been holding for what felt like an eternity, they had not ceased their sleeping, completely unmoved.

At least, for as far as he could tell.

*"Fuck me...I have to be more careful...I could have...I could have woken them up. Stupid, stupid, stupid!"* Instinctively, his hand traveled to his arm.

Scratching, scratching, scratching, scratching, scratching, scratching-

Dash gave the clock another look, watching its lazy hands, as if shifting through molasses tick slowly, as if it were mocking him until it suddenly struck him.

*"07...07:14? H-how..?"* How had the time gotten away from him that quickly? School was beginning soon, real soon (if not already), and here he was, still standing here, clutching himself, remarking with irritation as his limbs reluctantly fell at his sides as if his muscles were made of stone. Easing from the spot where the syringe rested on the ground, he crept over to the kitchen area, crouching down to open up one of the cabinets, retrieving his black t-shirt and red varsity jacket, worn and torn from use and time, wincing as the fabric coursed over the numerous marks that painted his skin. Its once ruby-red color, the jewel of Kwan's Dad's team, the Maine Cougars, was washed out, leaving it a diluted version of what it once was, but Dash couldn't have thanked him more when the former had given it to him.

It went everywhere he went; it was the one thing that he could really call his own.

He allowed his body the liberty of moving of its own volition for it knew better than he what it needed to do. It was practiced, rehearsed, its knowledge of which panels to step on, where needles would lie unchecked, where the odd bottle of vodka laid in waiting for him to mess up and blow his cover, but he wouldn't have it.

He couldn't afford to do that.

Skillfully, he worked himself over to the mirror in the corner of what appeared to be the living room (though it was only really comprised of the couch and small table, coated from edge-to-edge with papers, strewn about with reckless abandon; as far as he could tell, those were bills were months ago, left untouched and unpaid), and despite it being cracked and its small stature, but it worked well enough. Standing before it, Dash pulled and adjusted his black shirt, scrunching up his nose at the rancid scent of the many days it was

left unwashed wafted up through his senses. He was thankful, though, as the color probably hid the shitload of stains that were probably hiding along its surface.

But there was nothing that could be done for the scent.

As always.

Second to this was the jacket, slipped seamlessly over his shoulders, checking out how it looked, traveling from his shoes, upwards.

Regarding first the old sneakers upon his feet, they were clad in dirt and worn, once pristine and white, though it was hard to remember just when he had gotten them. They didn't fit as well, just as his pants didn't, bearing just around his ankles and framed by the old, dingy socks Allen had discarded in the yards some time ago. Funnily enough, that appeared to be the case with most of his stuff; old, used items that he couldn't fit too well and that no one wanted. Though, he assured himself, that it could be worse, recalling the times where he hadn't had any...at all. His black shirt hugged him a bit...tightly. Tightly enough that you could just see his ribs, if you were looking for them.

Good thing most people weren't.

Sometimes, when getting dressed in front of his daddy after they finished, he had a funny way of telling him that he looked bad.

That his shirt made him look a little too "sweet", like the gays.

For a long time, he didn't know if that was a bad thing, if he should be upset or not, but it was always framed as a negative, so that's what he believed.

**'I mean, aren't you, though?'**

**'Yeah, you are a fuckin' fagg-'**

'Shut-up, already! God, can't you guys just...just leave me alone?' At this, he caught sight of his own face, and he flinched, almost tempted to do a double-take of his own visage to make sure he was seeing himself right.

God, he looked fucking awful.

Like the rat his mommy told him that he was.

He'd always been tan, you know? What many what refer to as a 'Sun-kissed', and that was an understatement, he felt, on his part, as most of his time as a child (when he wasn't home; he didn't have the chance to be in clubs) was spent outside, baking in the summer heat as he and his friends would play any manner of games that they could make up. Hot, hot heat, turning his once sheet-like skin into bronze, or at least, that's what people told him that he looked like.

He tried not to look into the mirror too much.

It made him feel...weird.

Insecure.

But looking at himself now, he didn't look like that, sickly, pale visage greeting him as he swept a hand over the acne-ridden skin, grazing just under his eyes were dark bags, framing them like that of a raccoon's.

He would have stopped to wonder what happened, how he let himself look like this, but with Kwan off at SAT prep, Star and Paulina traveling together with their parents, and Dale at trade school, he wasn't left with much of a reason to get 'dolled-up'. What? So he could stalk the back alleys and dark corners of Amity Park? Why put forth the effort to try and look good if no matter what he did, he would still be ugly.

Disgusting.

Putrid.

Dash figured he wasn't worth the effort.

Not with the amount of makeup it took to cover up the...dark splotches that coated a good portion of his features.

This time, he thought as an aside, was important, though.

September 3rd was a day for good impressions, it was the first day back to school, after all, but he had to be quick, spotting out of the corner of his eye that the clock had struck to 07:23, far later than he thought it would be, but not impossible. He would just have to put his makeup skills to work.

Coming back to school with an ugly mug like his wouldn't serve anyone, would it?

Hell, he couldn't stand looking at himself, so why would anyone else?

Fresh layers of cheap foundation, concealer, and the like were caked on, patted dry, and left aside, though after a moment, he decided to take them with him, just in case, carefully setting them into the ratty bag that he had kept since his first day of school, so many years ago. The teen was often asked why he kept the same bag, but thankfully he was a good liar; there was no reason to tell them anything they didn't need to know, and it isn't as if he hadn't asked for new ones before.

But only once.

He recalled when he tried to ask his parents for a new bag like the rest of his friends when his strap had fallen off at some point, making it harder to carry.

He only needed to be burned with a cigarette once to know not to ask again.

Setting the bag back on the ground, he worked his hands slowly across the kitchenette table, careful of the odds and ends that may clang or bang against one another, quivering, sweaty palms easing each item that he required for the day into the pouch at his feet; he wasn't really in the mood for yet another lecture from Mr. Falluca about preparedness and all of that sort of stuff. He knew what he needed to do.

'Though...,' he seemed reminded himself quietly, having trouble discerning whether it was him that had said it, or the mutters in his ears that uttered it,'...it isn't as if it really matters if my stuff. I can't even do the work, so why even bother with it all?' Pausing for a moment, the adolescent eyed the contents of the bag, squinting with thought as he considered it, resting his hand on the handle of the bag loosely. He *could* leave it here, knowing full well that it would make little to no difference to how well he could do today (it was supposed to be an easy day, but he knew that he would end fucking it up somehow; he always did, without fail).

He would come and go just as stupid as he was before, reminding himself bitterly of the inky spell of hate that ruminated in his chest for himself.

He was stupid, an idiot, worthless.

So fucking worthless.

Breathing in, breathing out, he tried to quell it, closing his eyes and reopening them where he felt the clock would be, sighing as the time began to squeeze harder on him. He wouldn't have much more time to choose, and in some ways, he already knew what he would do.

It wasn't worth the risk of coming there empty-handed. His teachers would definitely notice him coming with nothing in hand; they would yell at him, give him detention (though he wouldn't complain about not having to go home later, but really, that would just be withholding the inevitable), but worse yet, they may call his parents. Dash almost loosed his bowels just thinking about it, hurrying to put the rest of the items into an orange bag before zipping it up.

It was bad enough that he had to look them in the face and tell them that he didn't have the work that he needed, but on top of that, not have the shit he needed to at least look like he was prepared. Though, it wouldn't be the first time that his teachers would take notice of his lack of effort; he'd stopped trying a long time ago.

**'Take it, take it~'**

**'What's the point of taking it if you're too stupid to do it anyway?'**

*"Whatever, it can't hurt. I can at least look like I give a shit, you know? Not sure I wanna get in trouble...again."* The teen said quietly to no one, though the voices seemed to chime in to tell him otherwise, to which annoyed him. Avoiding the leftover strewn bottles, trash, and waste

that littered the floor, moving to open the refrigerator at the command of his stomach that chortled and gurgled persistently, the pain of hunger that he'd become quite accustomed to, though he would have liked to avoid it if he could.

Unsurprisingly, as far as he could see there were only clear shelves, a familiar brush of lukewarm air blowing across his face welcoming to the sight of the few items that were leftover. Few things were left, either moldy or mostly eaten, with the others hardly worth mentioning. In his sight was a slice and half bread wrapped carelessly in a section of plastic wrap left stained with residue of the uncertain kind. Sure, it wouldn't hold for long, and it looked stale, but to his eyes, it was free for the picking. Opening a nearby cabinet, he didn't have to stand on his tiptoes to see into the dusty space, wiggling his hand as a few cockroaches crawled from the darkest corners away from the startling light that had invaded their little home. There wasn't much, as was the case before, but the handful of peanuts that hid beside some of the insects look promising, so he swiped the few that he could get without the eggs on them.

Those didn't taste as nice.

Closing it back, he took a small section of the plastic wrap from the bread and put the peanuts into them, and placed them in the front of his bag. As much as he would love to snack on them right now, the sound it would make, the loudness of his chewing; he couldn't chance it, even as the pain in his abdomen worsened.

It could wait.

With a single look to the clock, again, its lazy hands tick-tocking at their own pace, it read off as 07:28; to this, he quickly picked up his

bag, doing a once-over as he combed his eyes over whatever he may need. Hand outstretched, it actually seemed like he would be able to simply...leave, this time, that is, before it; the crunching of broken glass beneath the sole of his shoe.

Loud.

Grating.

Deafening.

It took everything in him not to hyperventilate right then and there at the sound of it the disgruntled, angry groan that seemed to, from the rushing blood to his pounding heart, shake the very foundation of the trailer, rattling Dash so profoundly to the bone that he stood stock still, frozen, rooted to the ground just as he had been before as a child. Daring to lift his foot, he couldn't give pause to the brimming hot tears bubbling at the corners of his eyes as he came into view of a pile of vodka-bottle shards that he had missed.

It was that easy.

A moment spent not paying attention was all it took.

**'What now, you fucking idiot? Why can't you ever do anything right?!'**

**'You're going to get into so much trouble...'**

**'What are you going to do?'**

**'Trouble, trouble, trouble...'**

**'Worthless piece of shit; you should have seen that there!'**

Honestly, he didn't know.

He didn't think that he could do anything.

They were right, completely right. He could have stepped over it, around it; anything but what he did.

Why was he so stupid?

Why? Why? WHY?

'No...no, no, no, no, no, no, no-,' There was movement, footsteps slow and clumsy, but coming towards him as the teen clenched his eyes as tightly as he could as to not make this worse than it already was. Dash, in all of his hysteria, didn't even notice the creak of the bed from the from mere steps from him, how a deep, bellowing voice had called to him, over and over again calling to him, only to have him stand there. He could only hear the rush of blood in his ears.

But he knew that all too well, the daunting, thunderous claps of feet to the old, wooden floor. Unable to move, unable to think, all he could do was stare, unblinking as his hulking form appeared, and he looked just like what he thought his father would look.

Angry.

Throughout his entire childhood, he didn't that his father had ever looked at him any other way, and it made him want to shrink, to become as small as he felt if only to get out of sight of him. For years, that all he knew, that is, apart from other times where he what he told him too, faintly recalling the dull ache of his back at its mentioning.

Any other time, he could only make him upset. That was all that he was good for, it seemed, or making Mom angry or irritated. Or annoying everyone.

Just being alive is enough to annoy others.

He wasn't good at much else.

If he were de-...nevermind.

"Haven't I told you about that goddamn noise, boy? Where the hell do you think you're goin', huh?...Well, speak up, nothin' to be afraid of, boy. I don't bite." Opening and closing his mouth, much like a fish gasping, begging for air, he was at a loss for words, stumbling over

each sound in his feeble attempt to make sense, to say anything at all, but the words just wouldn't form on his tongue.

God, he felt so...fucking...stupid.

What was wrong with him?

Allen clicked his tongue, leaning against the doorway of the bedroom he had just left, almost appearing to wait patiently through, Dash knew better.

He always knew better.

This wouldn't be enough, knowing full well that each and every moment that he spent here wore on the older man's patience, or whatever was left of it, spotting the bottle of liquor that swished in his hand each time he took a swig of it. There was never a moment that he could, in recent memory, honestly say that he had his father without alcohol. It just seemed so normal, so right.

It was sort of awkward to find that not everyone's parents woke up with a bottle in hand, or laid out on the couch, arms covered with burns or blisters.

Though, it was sort of strange to think that it wouldn't be the case anywhere else to see that, or at least, not something that he could recognize.

"S-sorry...sir. I was just...I was just getting r-ready for-," A loud bang, coming from the fist of the other many that sent a jolt of fear through him, he trembled, averting his eyes back to the ground where his shoes remained rooted and his knees looked just about ready to buckle beneath him. Dash could feel them, those eyes eating him, devouring him. Even just standing here made him wanted to squirm, knowing that his father was feasting this, enjoying...this.

Though frankly, he reminded himself once more, it wasn't as if he didn't deserve it.

"What have I told you about that goddamn *mumbling*. Always *fuckin'* mumbling, and it's really beginning to get on my nerves, you know. Speak up, for fuck's sake. I didn't wake up out of my sleep to play some charades, now out with it before you make me do somethin' I'm gonna regret." Stepping forward to close a bit of the gap between them, Dash went stiff once more, freezing at the sound of him coming closer to him. The teen wanted to cry, right then and there, but to think about how him breaking down and embarrassing himself would look to his Daddy, to look like the little bitch that he knew that he was in front of the man that already believed it, not to mention knowing that about himself.

"I have...I have school today, s-sir. It's the f-first day...," At this moment, he chanced a look at the clock, but didn't move to show his displeasure.

Of course, this would have happened. He couldn't even get to school on time.

He was expecting too much of himself.

'I'm late...again.' Why didn't he sound surprised, keeping his eyes firmly plastered on the ground. It was the only thing that he could make sense of, invigorated by a steady unease that made his heart pitter and patter unabated within the confines of his chest, something that he was quite familiar with.

*'Please...don't hurt me...'*

The sloshing of the contents of his father's bottle was the only thing that he could hear for some time, as if each and every minute, every second, lapsed indefinitely, though his father had a strange way of making it all return to him, clicking his teeth just as he'd begun to close the rest of the space between them (Dash hadn't noticed that he had begun walking towards him in the first place), towering over the young boy who had since felt his size grow smaller, ever smaller, over the broad-shoulder man that dwarfed him for several heads. As a matter of fact, eyes inexplicably glued to the top of his head, it seemed as though he could barely fit in the trailer, balding head just grazing the ceiling.

A strange thought he had just now; he got off track a lot, it would seem.

Perhaps he couldn't focus too well, though frankly, he found that it helped stave off the crippling feeling that sought to fill the hole in his gut.

Fear.

Apprehension.

The teen simply stood there, waiting for his father's word.

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In his mind, through the haze of alcohol and sleep, if there was one thing that he hated more than anything was to be woken up out of his sleep.

That shit pissed him off more than the slimy bitch in the other room that he had given up his life for...well, maybe not that, but it was pretty far up there. So imagine his agitation, his irritation, when he is greeted by the piece of shit that took everything away.

Standing there, looking as fucking stupid and dense as ever.

Of course, standing over him, the older man was able to mitigate this anger for a moment when he looked at him long enough. It didn't solve it by any means, but he never complained when it meant he could have a bit of...fun. Hell, he could feel his pants get tighter just looking at him.

Fuck, he hated this kid, but goddamn, was he pretty.

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Looking into those limitless black pools reminded him of something, a memory he'd just thought of. Pitch black met wavering, unsure blue; it was of something unpleasant, the reminder of his searching for the end of the emptiness behind them why he feared them. The boy felt smaller, so much smaller than he was.

He felt weak...exposed.

Just like that lonely child in his dream.

And he couldn't *stand* it.

He couldn't stand knowing that he was that way.

**'That's because you are, idiot. You've always been fucking weak.'**

Bringing him back from his thoughts was the clang of glass upon the ground, dribbling its contents upon the musty floor as he took his forearm across his mouth, wiping clean the speckles of liquor from his chin, though it did nothing to purge his maw of that ever-present stench of alcohol, tobacco, and, Dash noticed within moments of

their proximity, the disgusting morning breath that corrupted the already stale air; it took everything that the teen had not to wrinkle his nose in disgust.

***---(Warning for molestation and rape)---***

The man leaned in closer, taking a long sniff of his neck before pressing his arm against the wall, letting the arm that had barricaded one side of the boy; the end of his lip grazed his ear, his opposite, free of any objects, slid down his backside until it reached his buttocks, kneading them roughly. Dash couldn't help but jolt at the contact, wincing but never making the move to pull away or otherwise; he knew all-too-well what that would get him, attempting to focus solely on the odd stain on the carpet amongst the many others, the dent in the wall his father had made. Anything to take his mind off of the hand that raked along his back and bottom.

Allen leaned in, planting a soft kiss upon his son's lips.

"Well, I can't imagine you would need to be in a rush if you woke up on time, huh, boy? I think you could spare a few minutes for some...*quality* time, hm?" The snaking hand, coiling its way into the back of his pants, played in the seam of his arse, squeezing none too gently at the latent, healing blooms of red and purple sprinkled upon his back end.

The teen couldn't help the itch of anxiety that tugged at them, enough to even pull him away from what was happening. The last thing he needed was to miss entire classes on the first day, and though he couldn't see the clock around Allen's head, he could

practically feel the listless chime of the hands, counting each and every second, minute, and hour that dragged by. It was pretty much known that, by then, the first period was practically over, with the disembodied voice of Falluca to tell him how much of a fuck-up he was. Even though someone as mild-mannered as Mr. Falluca would probably never say that, he knew that was exactly what he was thinking.

That's what most people thought about him, you know?

The one thing that he could say about his parents is at least they didn't hide it.

Even now, with his father touching him, the boy jumping ever-so-slightly at the sensation of rough, calloused objects entering him, Dash knew it to be true, to be so tangibly true that each look that he so much shot his way was laced with malice and hatred. He hadn't a clue why his father felt that way, having not known to tell what was happening at the time that he was born (which should really go without saying).

It had simply been that way for a long as he could remember.

"Even now, you're fuckin' wet. You're practically begging for it." Removing his fingers and licking them, he turned Dash around to press himself upon the boy's body, moving to toss the now empty bottle somewhere behind him with a heavy clang, fumbling with Dash's belt-buckle, and soon his own. It was at some point after he felt his pants and worn underwear be pulled down his legs when he felt his world start to fade, sounds and sensations muffling as though covered with a fine layer of cotton. His father, too, only vaguely registering the pressure and throttle of his hips against his own as the

older man entered him.

Thrusting again and again as he was pushed up against the door of the trailer.

Though it didn't make it easier to ignore the voices, the sounds, the quiet was...nice, at least.

Quieter than...this.

A particularly loud grunt did make it past, though, erupting near his ear as hot, fogging breath nibbled at the lobe.

*'Happy thoughts, happy thoughts, happy thoughts; Daddy needed this. Daddy's happy, so I am.'* Dash recited, stiffening involuntarily as warmth filled him. It dripped down his legs, more so after he felt his father stop mounting him, oozing in slow droves as he tried his best to regain his senses. It clung to his skin in clumpy chunks, smearing on his legs and onto the seam of his pants.

Dash could still register his father on his back, planting rough kisses upon his neck and shoulders.

***---(End of the scene; you may carry on)---***

For a moment, nothing was said, no one moved. The teen didn't dare speak, though urged by the older man to pull his garments back up, despite the drying semen that stuck to him.

He was used to that feeling by now.

Kneading his buttocks, the boy could still feel the older man pressed against his back, bare skin clinging to his clothing as he muttered in his ears.

"See, there, now that's what I mean. At least you're good at somethin', if nothin' else. What time do you get home today?" Dazed, silent, the boy looked at the clock again.

'08:52? Almost the end of first class? Was I...was I out for that long?' It was always hard to tell the passing of time when they did that...

At least Daddy was happy.

"I...I think I get off at 02:30...this afternoon." He thought so. Honestly, he was having a bit of trouble thinking, the beginning of a sore throb on his bottom capturing his attention; at that point, he couldn't help but flinch at the touch, feeling the man give his end a tight squeeze before backing away. It was from a pack of six on the counter that he grabbed another can, some nondescript brand the teen couldn't identify, not that he had bothered to. Cracking it open, Allen took a few deep swallows of it before using his arm, again, to wipe away the drippings that had escaped from the sides of the can, and leaned back upon the crowded counter, his eyes never leaving the boy, traveling the length of his body up and before he zeroed in

on his face; all the while, his hand stroked his growing member, almost appearing to demand him to touch it.

He felt sick.

"Oh, yeah? That's uh...that's a *long* time to be away from home, boy, but you need to be getting goin'. I'm sure you'd *love* to stay here, wouldn't you, boy?" To this, Dash nodded, going to pick up the bag that laid at his feet, discarded at some point, though he struggled to hold back a wince at the strain of his back. Stringing it over his shoulder, he didn't look back up, trying his best to maintain his balance. Just as he'd grabbed the knob, his father's voice striking his back with a force that stationed him in place.

"...hear me, boy?" Wait, he had been saying something? When had he done that? When had he spoken to him?

**'You didn't hear him? You should have been paying attention!'**

**'Listen-up. Daddy's talking-'**

Slowly, too slowly, the teen felt his body turn, twisting about the swivel of his back to chance a look over his shoulder, mouth agape again.

What had he said?

The question stung on taught lips, creeping but never quite budding into words that he felt that he could form, the thudding of his heart, tight chest making it difficult to breathe; it was a chore to even look him in the eye when the two of them definitely knew what had happened.

Had he known he would do this?

Did he know what he wanted, that he hadn't heard him?

The first to speak was Allen, crushing the can, and inspecting it with idle interest as the words tumbled forth.

"Need somethin', boy? You're starting to make me think that you don't wanna go to school today; got somethin' on your mind?" The words were there, they were right there.

**'So fuckin' say them already, you stupid, lazy cunt.'**

**'Say it!'**

**'No, don't ask again. You should just go-'**

He couldn't do that! He knew exactly what kind of trouble he would get in if he left and didn't do what was told of him. There had only been a few times that had been the case, and to be honest, neither looked like a good option.

Dash had no idea where his mind had went, what he had been thinking, so why? Why didn't he hear him?

Ugh, what the *fuck* was wrong with him? Couldn't he just do one thing with messing up?

"S-sir? I..I don't think I-"

"For fuck's sake, ya little shit, speak the hell up! I'm not gonna repeat myself *all* of the time just because your dumbass can't comprehend anything. Open your goddamn mouth!" His eyes were watering, he could feel them, the pressure of the emotions that pressed behind them.

All of that was true.

If he had just been listening, if he just had better sense, if he had just heard him the first time, he wouldn't be making all of this trouble. That's all that he seemed to do.

Make trouble, get in trouble, do bad things.

Just all terrible, all of the time.

"I'm sorry...I'm sorry...I...I-I didn't hear you. Please, could you repeat what you said? I'm so sorry." There he was, that small child again, looking up at the towering beast in his midst. It always smiled down on him, just as it did now. as if it knew all things, had heard all things.

That was probably the case now, as the hulking man stepped forward and leaned down, grabbing a fistful of his hair to draw him closer to his face.

"Weren't you listening? You got ears, dontcha?" Throttling his head a bit, Dash realized that he was supposed to answer, responding with a fervent nod that had, admittedly, awakened a mild headache, both from the death grip his father had on him and the motion of it at all.

Yet another annoyance.

"Then why, might I ask, I am having to repeat what I say to you all the time? Why, Michael?"

No. Don't say that name.

He couldn't stand that name.

However, the man wasn't finished, shaking him again.

"Why are you like this? I give you everything that I can, I do all that I can, and this is what I get? A fuckin' retard that don't appreciate shit. Is that what you are? A stupid, ugly fuck that don't appreciate anything that we do for you?" At this point, Dash didn't bother trying to stop the hot tears that seemed to pour from his face, squeezing his eyes shut, so tightly that it hurt, as he said it over and over again.

"I'm sorry...I'm sorry, Daddy. Please...p-please, I-," The hand squeezed harder, throttling him rougher this time.

Dash's neck was beginning to hurt.

"No, you aren't. I know you aren't, and that's okay. But you know what, I'll let you off this time, but you're gonna have to do somethin' for me. I mean, you should make it up to me, right?" To this, the boy nodded quickly, though the tears didn't stop.

They usually never did.

To this, the man told him to drop his bag, pulling him along to the back room where a bare mattress laid, stained with substances new and old, but Dash never minded it...much.

It wasn't as if he was back here enough to really notice them.

Throwing the child upon the mattress, he was told to take his clothes off, his father doing the same, and he knew what was coming, though frankly, he usually did, you know. Harsh kisses were planted against his lips, and despite the throbbing ache of his backside, it was so familiar to him that his father hadn't even had to tell him to ready himself, licking two of his fingers and pushing them in until he thought it was enough, regardless as the red that clung to his hand.

His Daddy liked it when he helped, so he did.

Even when he wanted to scream, it was fine.

He didn't mind so much, really.

It was the least that he could do.

---

Softly, he shut the door, making his way down the stairs of the trailer before traversing the short path through the woods around his home. Absently, the cool breeze made him shiver and pull the sparse, stringy jacket onto his shoulders; how could he forget the bitter cold that nipped at his exposed ankles or the biting sensation of the old that grazed his arms? Amber and red leaves scuttled like hermit crabs along with the wind, parting the path and out of his way on the sidewalk as the cold hands dipped and weaved between his legs. With no one left on the path (not that anyone came this way, anyway), he didn't bother hiding the limp that budded from the stiff, nagging ache of his backside and haunches, shooting angry daggers in dark places down below. It was fine, he told himself, stopping every few meters or so to rub gently at the area, though that didn't do much to soothe it. He could feel the start of a wet spot on his pants where his bottom

was, but he tried not to mind it so much, figuring it would dry soon enough.

He'd have to remember to go to the nurse to get some meds or something, though the barreling voice of his parents would tell him otherwise.

Wasn't he a man? He could deal with a bit of this, couldn't he?

It isn't as if he deserved to get them.

No, he would just wait until stopped eventually. It always did.

Though, even this wasn't true, his father's voice echoed in his mind, along with the voices that laughed and snickered in the safety of a place he couldn't get to.

It was fine as long as he didn't think about it too much.

He shouldn't complain.

Pulling his mind elsewhere, the boy minded the path before him, and dipped to the left, running into a patch of bushes that acted as an entrance to the start of the thick placing of trees that surrounded the way to his home.

These kind of days were often unassuming, he noticed, dipping along a beaten path as the remnants of thunder sand above, trekking deeper into the woods, and he was thankful, a trail worn from the soles of many shoes guiding through familiar landmarks and sights. Each print left such a profound mark in the dirt that it seemed as though it had always been there, but the boy knew better. It was in his youth that he'd spotted this loose thicket, a collection of plants far too thin to be a coincidence; it was with a part of his hand that he'd opened this way, and was with the constant pound of his shoe that he'd made this path.

**'Sorta like how Daddy always pounds you-'**

"Shut-up. Just shut-up; it's not like that." It was alright for him to talk out loud now, what, with the closest thing that he could hear him being the odd bird or squirrel? And it wasn't like that, he could hear his mind, his own thoughts, affirm with such ferocious anger that he stopped just short to say it aloud to the open woods.

Daddy doesn't do it without...he deserved it.

Daddy was just taking what he was due, that's all.

That's all there is to it.

Though that wasn't what he'd meant to think about.

It was day after day of this, rounding the odd bend and traversing and descending along the dips and divvies until he'd seen it; a small tent lied in a clearing, and though it was tattered, it covered what was inside well enough. It was within it that a voice resounded that he remembered so fondly, so much so that he picked up his pace a bit, though his limp still remained.

Stepping carefully around the tent and the many toys scattered around the shelter, Dash knelt down, peering inside a tiny slip to the smallest ball of fluff, their little lungs causing to heave up and down in their chest, telling the teen that they were asleep. In as quiet of a voice that he could muster, his hand gentle and light, he carefully nudged the pup's side, rousing the small animal from their rest. Dash couldn't help the doting smile that pulled at his weary feathers as he watched her stretch, bellowing a great yawn (as much as a pup as small as her could manage) before turning to meet his waiting blue eyes.

"Hey, Roxie. Sorry I had to wake you up, girl." At the first word, she burst from the tent, slobbering and barking with such tangible excitement at his legs that it made a big, goofy smile break across his face.

Man, it was always a treat getting the chance to see her, and in his stead, he knelt meeting her licks with joyous acceptance, though he flinched as she went to tackle him, causing him to land square on his bottom. Steel claws raked up his backside, the boy pausing for a breath as he struggled to remain upright.

The pup stopped, whining lowly as she licked his hand gently. The touch of her tongue registered with, and after a few moments spent

trying to collect himself, the teen pet her head, smiling weakly down his lap at her.

"It's...it's okay, girl. I know you didn't mean it...not that you even did anything wrong..." It was him that had flinched, he knew, biting his lip as he went to kneel in front of her, petting her head in the midst of it, trying his best to ignore the growing wetness of his pants.

It was his fault.

Always his fault.

At this, she still whimpered, but she went back licking him, hopping on his lap (or at least trying to; her legs were still small), stretching up to send sloppy kisses upon his cheeks, and even then, the pain dulled.

If just for a moment.

"I missed you, too. Okay, okay! I can't stay, but I promise I'll be back soon, but before I go." Putting just enough space between himself and the pup as to not hurt her, he swung the backpack onto the dirt, his hand fishing through the contents (not that there was that much in there) until he found it, the bread that had been, unfortunately, squashed and folded beneath the book, not to mention him throwing it around. Opening the bag and tearing off a small chunk of it, he took the time to feed it to the pup who gobbled it up greedily.

"I know...I know it isn't much but...this was all I could find for now." Not a second passed before she went to take it, but she paused, eying him oddly. Her paw lifted, padding is the dark lines that dotted the beginning of his arms, pushing at the bread in his hand it began to drift towards his body, and to this, he frowned.

He knew that she was still hungry, she had to be, especially since his visits were few and far between, but there wasn't much that he could do, at least, not yet.

Not now.

Smiling softly, he waved it in front of her, encouraging her to eat it, watching as she cocked her head to her left, eyeing him with what he could only guess was...concern? Using his free hand, the boy rubbed her head, chuckling when she placed her head in his gentle, calloused palm.

"It'll be fine, I promise. Maybe I could, uh, fish some loose change from beneath the vending machines or something. I can figure it out, but you need it more than I do, but you have to eat up, girl or I'll be later than I already am. Come on, Roxie." Giving one last nod to his companion, she relented, scooping up the rather stale morsel before climbing back onto his lap, licking and wagging like before. Something in him begged him to stay, but even more than that was the nagging him, the fear that forced him to his feet. He really should be going, already feeling the detention that he definitely had now. As if disappointed, the pup nipped at his ankles, playfully so, and Dash was tempted, sighing at the sight of a soggy, worn-out chew toy that the pup had thrown at his feet.

"I know, Rox, but I really have to go. Maybe another time we could

play; you like that? You like that, girl?" The boy couldn't help swooping her up in his arms, allowing many slobbering kisses to coat his face before he stopped abruptly, placing the pup on the ground once she had noticed that makeup coated her mouth; he would definitely need to reapply it right before he went to class.

Taking the same toy at his feet, waving it tentatively to get her attention, he threw it back into the tent and hurried to seal it back as she went after it, grabbing his bag and traversing down the path, breathing out a breath of relief at the thought of how long it would have taken to get her back if they had started playing, though he couldn't deny the ache that settled in his gut as he listened to her departing barks.

Though, he doubled back, suddenly feeling really conscious of the tent, taking a few leaves and twigs to conceal the objects as best as he could, scoffing at how stupid it looked.

**'What if someone comes? They'll definitely find her.'**

**'That's the best that you could do?'**

**'If they find her, they'll kill her.'**

**'It would be all your fault, you know? All your fault.'**

"N-no one even comes this way...but I'm sure...I'm sure it'll be fine. I just have to be sure; I don't know what I would do if someone found her, or...-," Quickly, he ejected the thought from his mind, refusing to even consider something like that.

That wouldn't happen, it couldn't happen, and it didn't, Dash berated himself mentally, help to think like that. She would be fine out her; she had toys, blankets, water. He would have to train her not to shit in the tent, he thought with a chuckle that worked to dissolve the tangle of anxiety that had nestled its way into his chest.

**'She'll die...'**

"Ugh, please, just...could you stop? She'll be fine, she'll be fine!"

Why couldn't they just be quiet?

She would be fine; Rox would be there when he got back.

She had to be. He couldn't bear for something to happen to her.

Taking out his small, cracked cellphone, he regarded the time with silent acceptance, realizing with an exasperated sigh that second period was about to end.

God, he couldn't even manage to get to school on time, at least first period.

With a hoist of his backpack, Dash picked up the pace towards the school, grimacing as the ache that rang along his spine made its rounds, but he could at least be there for half of the day, so he would push until he got there. Only when the sign of Casper High appeared over the hill on the sidewalk did he feel relief, making the final push before he burst into the front doors, entering the main lobby.

He'd made it in one piece.

Now all that was left was to make it through the day.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
> Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.

## 3. His Day, Resuming

**Summary for the Chapter:**

> He finally makes it to class, but school and academics were never his strong suit, finally meeting up with Kwan after a long summer of waiting, though admittedly, things are a bit...weird.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.
>
> To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)
>
> Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.
>
> Thank you.

"Now, can anyone tell me what the answer to number three is? This is important; it'll be on your test this Friday, and I would hate to see anyone pass up free points because they couldn't round to the correct decimal...oh, Mr. Chen? What is the answer?" The man, compact and jittery, adjusted his tie through the choosing from the sparse selection of raised hands amongst the sea disinterested students. It didn't seem as though anyone was really estatic to be back, or at least, not so soon, though to be fair, Dash wondered idly, he couldn't really say that he was excited to be back either, could he? Yet, considering

everything, it was a bit more...peaceful here, so it wasn't so bad, he guessed. Looking to his right, a student left his seat, a recognizable face amongst the others in their class. Upon his picking, the hand was placed back on the desk, teal eyes regarding the work in his book whilst his lips pulled into a confident smirk, reciting his answer verbatim. Kwan, adjusting his clothes and clearing his throat to speak.

"The answer, taking it to the thousandths place or three decimal places, would be 0.357." Out of the corner of his eye sat Dash, watching him give an explanation as to how he solved the problem, each word, as he saw it, carefully chosen and spoken with such assurance that he could not help the twinge that settled in his chest.

That spark and burn that made him bury his head into his arms with a feeling he couldn't place, and in an anger, he felt, wasn't justified, he knew that all too well.

So why?

Why did it feel unfair?

Kwan was good at something, so why should he feel personally irritated at the fact? He'd always been so...great, so cool and smart, so it was only natural that he should feel happy for *him* that he was happy. He worked for everything that he's earned, so if anything, the other was entitled to it. Being happy for him was what he was supposed to be.

That's what anyone would (or *should*) say in this situation, Dash

figured through his readjusting of his body in his chair, that same dull ache leaving his backside throbbing, though his attention never left the former. He was supposed to like seeing him (Kwan, in this sense) smile triumphantly through the praise of his teachers and even fellow students (hell, even some of the nerds liked him).

Not that he particularly cared about being liked or anything. In all honesty, he was never really regarded as particularly friendly or likeable, though that isn't to say that he hasn't, or still doesn't, try, it's just that...he doesn't know. Dash always just thought it was because he wasn't nice enough or didn't try hard enough. Even with the times that he'd smelled bad or said weird things, he didn't really know what it was that made people be, well, wary of him. Yet, it seemed more and more like it was just him; Kwan, and even the nerds made it look effortless whilst he struggled to get words out sometimes. Eventually, he figured it would be easier to just be the loudest in the room, to be the one that was heard and seen all of the time, even if...even if that made people dislike him.

Which is exactly what happened.

It wasn't often that people would even mind him, making sure to ignore the loud idiot that always seemed to make a ruckus...not that much had changed.

So imagine his irritation at the sight of an egghead who barely spoke get all of the love and adoration from their peers. From kindergarten to now, the former was always what he wished he could be.

It was just something about it, something in the way that it just...came to him...how people flocked to him and he just seemed to know the answers, and the right thing to say, or do. It seemed

effortless, so why?

Why did he have to try so hard to do anything?

'Whatever,' The teen passed dismissively, giving a passive look to the other through the attempts to snuff this emotion, whatever he would call it, '...it's not like this is my sort of thing anyway. I'm good at other things...like...,' A few moments of concerted thought with nothing to show for it didn't serve to rid him of his bitter tongue, squeezing a section of his forearm as the irritation bit back harder. Surely there was something, right? Well, not if the voices had anything to say about it.

**'You aren't good at anything.'**

**'I don't think you have any actual skills, now that I think about it...'**

**'What are you good for apart from being fuck-'**

No, that wasn't true.

He was good at...good at basketball, maybe? Football, too? He was the captain, so that had to count for something...anything.

Oh, who was he kidding?

None of that even compared to Kwan.

Not even slightly.

As the former went quiet, with him and the teacher apparently having a conversation that he hadn't heard a thing of (talking about math was a fast way to get him to fall asleep, though he found that less funny now in the moment), the taller of the boys whispered over to him after moments of allowing him to settle back down.

Anything to focus on apart from the constant, never-ending, exceptionally *loud* talking of the whispers between his ears, the anger and loathing that churned like fire in his chest, the throbbing of his backside.

Any distraction, anything at all, was welcome.

Kwan distinctly jumped at the sound of his voice, widening eyes just happening to relax as memory appeared to rekindle that warm smile that Dash was so absorbed in, though, and he could have been imagining it, but it seemed...tired, almost, as if the other had been sick of him or something. It was strange, though, noticing his reflection in the window to the class just beside Kwan, the youth pondering it with heightened interest, leaning over in the aisle to get a closer look, for a moment ignoring the uncomfortable glance he'd received from Kwan and a few other students.

Somewhere in him something screamed, the distant call of caution implanting the seeds of fear into him about the state of his makeup, remembering the hassle it was to angle his body just enough to avoid the steely glare of the receptionist in the main office. He wasn't sure, but he was about ninety percent sure that the lady had been an eagle

in her past life, bifocal lenses almost appearing to zero in on each and every flaw that he had. Not that it would have been difficult, spotting the start of a smear from his lip to his cheek where dark bruises laid beneath.

Roxie had, in all of her lovely licks, managed to remove a fair bit of the makeup that coated his sallow skin, though, frankly, Dash couldn't quell the concern that riddled his gut as he pondered the effect of eating makeup in puppies. Despite the circumstances, the possibility that she could be sick was worse than whatever trouble he would face now.

Did they get sick from that sort of thing?

How much of it did they need to eat to die?

Was Roxie going to die?

Where was the nearest vet?

Internally, he breathed, and breathed again, trying to slow the quickening beat of his heart; she was fine, he was fine, and him panicking in the middle of class was a much more pressing issue as he felt the beginnings of a wheeze collapse his chest, much to the concern of Kwan who'd also leaned to hear what he had been saying.

Wait, he'd been talking? Out loud?!

"Who's Roxie? Oh, and did you say something about...makeup? What are you talking about?" The other genuinely looked confused, scratching his head through the occasional affirming look to both Dash and Falluca who'd yet to take notice of their conversation. Though even if he had, the boy noticed he'd stopped to consider, he was probably only keeping quiet about it because he really liked Kwan...in particular, and was probably more willing to be a bit more lenient with the former than the latter.

He and the 'Squirrely Geezer', never really got along for several reasons, most of which were his own doing.

But the questions from before still lingered in the air, hanging over his head like a damp umbrella that chanced to close on his hand.

'Play it cool, play it cool; just pretend like nothing even happened.' Chuckling, he flashed that infamous grin, starting with a jab harder than he had intended, but he figured the situation was still salvageable.

It wasn't too far gone.

**'Stop being such a weirdo.'**

**'You should be a bit more careful, you're not being careful enough...'**

"Someone's been hittin' the books a bit hard, huh, egghead? Lookin' to kiss up to Falluca?" Attempting to redirect the conversation, Dash caught a glimpse of himself again in the window's reflection, Dash had startled himself for a moment there, only just taking notice of the strange, desperate child that looked back at him, if just for a hair of a second for. Odder, still, was the sound of his words; even if that voice had been his own, there was no denying grating, shrill timbre of his own tone that made him want to scream.

Had he always been this irritating to listen to?

He could tell that Kwan felt the same way at the manner in which he furrowed his brow tirelessly.

It had been an entire summer since he's sounded like this, but he could not, for the life of him, recall being this irritated with himself.

Wait.

What was going on today?

Why did he feel so...so angry right now?

Angry and...and tired? It made him feel sick.

Maybe...maybe if he just ignored it, then...then he could move forward with his day.

After all, he liked himself as Dash, just Dash.

Not Michael.

Stupid, unpopular, jumpy Michael.

This was Dash, yet despite that, it didn't make that sense of disillusionment go away.

At the jab (both literally and figuratively), Kwan smirked haughtily, even when the exhausted expression didn't leave his eyes. However, like him, the former seemed really good at hiding it, though not nearly as good as him.

Dash had to admit that having your friend burst into class, throwing open the door and stomping over to his seat whilst he also, without any warning at all, jabbed you in the shoulder and made a point to talk really loudly to you in the middle of the class would be pretty embarrassing. Who would want to be associated with someone as rude and stupid as him? He didn't even need to ask the question to know the answer.

No one, that's who.

There probably wasn't a way for him to be more annoying or obnoxious than he had been in that moment alone, but another part of him argued back.

Wouldn't *you* be excited (and perhaps a little irritated) if the friend that said would call and keep in touch over the summer didn't even bother to do so? Not even once? Not that he was upset or anything.

No, never.

He was busy with, well, whatever it is that he does in his spare time, so of course he understood that part.

Nope, not upset.

Yeah, he probably sounded a bit selfish, childish even. Kwan had a life of his own, and friends that weren't his, and a life that wasn't his, and an actual future, so for fuck's sake, yeah, he was a tad bit peeved at him. Did he have to be loud and annoying? No, but was he going to do it anyway?

Hell fucking yes; he could feel bad about it later.

Especially since even through all of it, the yelling, the jabbing, the greeting...Kwan didn't look particularly happy to see him.

Or maybe it was just him.

Maybe he was just reading him wrong or something.

He hoped that was the case.

Straightening the pencils that were laid neatly upon his desk (though they were already so), Dash could only guess that he was gathering his thoughts or something like that. Kwan seemed to do that when he was considering something, he noticed, but it was strange.

What did he have to think so hard for?

Had he always been this thoughtful?

"Well, I mean...not really. Actually trying has its perks, you know? It isn't so bad to participate, and just because I do, doesn't make me an egghead...it's pretty fun" The former couldn't deny hearing the tangible joy in his voice, though his tone had shifted at the end as if he'd avoided looking at him; the wistful look in his eyes framed to turn his attention to the front board, opening a notebook to, what Dash assumed, jot down notes. Of course, the former smile at him, but he couldn't help the trickle of agitation that pulled at his features.

----- (Kwan's Perspective) -----

Looking back, Kwan wasn't really sure if he liked being Dash's friend.

Back then, at his young age, perhaps that shroud of idealism and pity got to him. Seeing that destitute little thing like what Dash used to be, sitting alone in class, sure, he could have been genuinely intrigued, but he knew, even in his young mind, that the former just wasn't someone that he would confide in, someone that was more akin to a...a spectacle that you would see on the street than someone with actual thoughts and such. He was lonely and having someone just desperate enough to follow him around like a sick puppy was enough to satisfy the need for contact that pestered him in his quieter moments. Initially, the experience was nice, having someone that was rowdy and uncouth as a second to him, but the other had a way of making students, and even the teachers, less than happy when they were around, even if he wasn't responsible.

Sure, it was fun being the smartest person in the room, but he definitely didn't care to be seen with the lot that he usually did. Dale, with his rude remarks and general idiocy; Star, a glorified fleshlight; Paulina, the pretty airhead of the group; finally, Dash, the brute he'd somehow gotten himself entangled with. How did it get so bad, he would ask himself in the quiet moments of his day, pondering the state of his social life, the words of his parents ringing over and over between the thoughts of school and the million or so things he had to take care of.

Over and over again, teachers, staff, and even his parents would recount to him where he had gone wrong, and strangely enough, he couldn't disagree with them.

"Can't you see that he's a terrible influence on you? All he does is get into trouble, not that the rest of them are any good." He would often hear his mother say this to him after he told them of his day, somehow fitting that in between his recent grades and games after school. He couldn't deny the truth in her words, simply nodding along as it went on.

"You would much better off talking to new people that are on your level. Wouldn't you? What are you really gaining from being around them?" His father this time, the gentler of the two, but there was still a sternness to his voice that he couldn't ignore. He didn't know, really. Kwan wasn't sure if it was from the fear of rejection (he'd been a dick to a lot of the students of the school when he was around Dash), or some repressed need for validation (the others practically drooled over him).

He wasn't sure, but there was one thing that he was certain of.

Seeing that blonde idiot waltz into the room as if the entire school belonged to him infuriated to an unreasonable degree, and just having him to his arm, the former sending a light jab that had worked to fray his nerves, or just the fact that he touched him, made his skin crawl. He always smelled, the plastering of makeup on his face was too obvious (not that he'd say anything, though he did wonder why he applied it in the first place), the way that his hair was heavy and slick with gel, and he was as dumb as a doorknob. But could he do better?

Surely he could find others like himself?

Bright, ambitious, sensible.

Maybe he'd try a new club out for a change; anything to get away from *this*.

Putting a smile on his face, he turned to Dash.

He'd make due for now.

---

Ugh, why did he care *so* fucking much?

What could he possibly be writing that down that he didn't already know?

He's done that the entire summer; can't he just look at him for five minutes? Five FUCKING minutes?

Just five minutes of his attention was what he wanted, it couldn't be that hard to-

**'Aww, is someone a little upset? What, you got a hard-on for him or somethin."**

*"No, just...I just want him to pay attention; just for a minute. Is that so*

*bad-,"* There it was, that look again. That confused, estranged look, realizing that he'd been saying that aloud. Mentally berating himself, the teen chuckled, passing off the his last comment.

Surely he was kidding, right? Schoolwork and fun definitely didn't belong in the same sentence as far as he was concerned.

*Please notice me. Look at me...please.*

However, Kwan seemed to look away, still jotting down notes.

No, he needed to talk to him.

He wanted to talk right now.

And if there was *one* thing that Dash was good at, it was getting attention.

Shifting in his chair and pushing back, the old legs scraped against the tiled floor with a loud cry, the teen was pleasantly surprised to see all of the heads cock to him, effectively taking away the attention from his mumbling.

"There, that should get something out of him.", The teen grumbled in his thoughts, turning back to Kwan, but the first thing that the latter noticed was his face, his expression strange, taut with strain as he waved apologetically to the other students who'd, at this point, lost interest in the two of them, returning to their work. The former didn't even look at him, scoffing before doing the same, hardly turning an eye to him before returning to his work.

Wait.

Scoffing?

That's not...that's not what he was supposed to do.

He was supposed to laugh with him, not look like that.

He looked just like everyone else, just like the rest of them.

Friends were supposed to laugh with you, not look like that.

**'Wow, could you be more annoying? I mean, really.'**

**'Desperate much?'**

**'You act like you want to such his dick or somethin'.'**

**'What a loser.'**

**'Stop being so weird.'**

No, no he wasn't thinking about this at all.

Shut-up.

Was it bad to want to just talk? Surely that wasn't a crime?

No, he had gotten their attention, his attention, and that's all he needed.

"*Fun*? I don't know why I'm surprised. You were always into this junk; don't you like to do other things?" Was that a stupid question? Dash sighed a bit at his own tone; he was supposed to be curious, not desperate.

*Please, just talk to me.*

Watching Kwan pull his seat in the slightest bit, straightening his posture this time (what was with him and straightening things), hands fumbling with the various items upon the surface, made the former nervous.

Why was he thinking so hard?

Just say something!

Please, anything!

"Junk? You know I've always been "into" this sort of thing. Just because *you* don't understand its value and *I* actually like doing it doesn't mean that it isn't a respectable interest." What did he just say? He wasn't...he wasn't speaking to him, was he? What was that supposed to mean?

Dash felt a retort bundle from his throat and tongue, but before he could spout it, Falluca's voice chimed in, loud enough for the entire class.

"Hello, Chen...*Baxter*. I see that the two of you are having an enthralling conversation. Care to share it with the class?" Looking to his right, it appeared as though Kwan was going to answer, but just as he'd opened his mouth to speak, Dash rushed in, overtaking his words.

"Yeah, we were, but I don't think I'm in the mood to let you in it. Not really your business, *Teach*'." To this, some of the students whispered; he couldn't quite hear what they were saying, but he could only guess that his little comment hadn't surprised any of them. For a moment, Falluca looked flustered but quickly regained his composure, almost appearing as though he wanted to smirk, but his face remained firm.

"Is that so? Well, I can't imagine you'd have an issue then, starting the pile of reports I asked you all for at the end of last year, would you? I love to see yours at the top of your row." With that, the rest of the students followed suit, taking from their desks the stack of papers that they had been assigned, and the reports, a project aimed to sight different instances of the Fibonacci Sequence in nature. Some had even begun to exchange what they had down for their projects, though he noticed them, a few eyes that had peered at him in the midst of him sitting there, droplets of sweat beading on his forehead as his breath hitched.

He'd forgotten about that...completely.

Rummaging around in his bag (he hadn't made it to his class in the morning to be given the locker combination), he dug out his old notebook, the journal bending off at the hinges and flimsy in his hands, the borders of the cover scratched and worn with age. Opening it, there weren't many pages left, most covered with weird scribbles and sparse words, some of his failed attempts to keep up during class when he actually tried.

It was mostly just nonsense; words that don't relate, statements left without context.

They were worthless...so that's why he tore off three of them and placed them on top of the pile.

Of course, people laughed, at least he had thought that they had, squeezing himself further down into his seat to make himself smaller as Falluca came down each row to take the papers, taking it pretty

roughly from his hands when he had reached him, not even bothering to look in his direction.

Only the first day and he was already going to fail his class.

God, he was so useless.

He shouldn't have been surprised really, biting his lip as an odd itch on his arms settled it, though he rubbed at his sleeves.

That would have to wait, he couldn't do that here.

He knew from the very moment that assignment was given at the end of last year, their freshman year, that he wouldn't be able to do it, as was the case practically every year. He didn't bother looking up as he listened, listened to secret words play on the various tongues around them, not that he would have been able to, locked in place by his trembling legs, knees firmly plastered to the bottom of the desk.

It was hard to breathe...he couldn't breathe.

He knew they were talking about him. His thoughts, the voices, told him so. All the rumors that they were muttering under their breaths were for him, he was sure of it. They knew that he didn't have his project. They all knew, didn't they?

**'Look, look, they're whispering. They're saying bad things about you~'**

**'Listen, can't you see how much they all hate you?'**

*"N-no, no it...if I just don't say anything...they won't have a reason to, right? As long as I'm good, no one with-"*

Eyes.

So many...looking at him, *staring* at him.

Why were they looking at him?

He hadn't done anything wrong, had he?

**'Kwan's looking at you, laughing at you. Look at him, he can't *stand* being around you.'**

**'Who could when you're this fucking' annoying and stupid.'**

He had to focus. Focus on his own thoughts. Looking to his right, Kwan's mouth was opening and closing, talking to him, but he wasn't

smiling, so he wasn't *laughing*, right?

So why could he hear them laughing?

Who was laughing?

He couldn't tell, but he could hear them muttering, mumbling, whispering.

***"Dash is so dumb."***

That wasn't true.

***"No homework again? But really, who's surprised?"***

He tried, he really did-

***"Are you even trying?"***

He was, he promised he was!

***"You're too stupid for anyone to even like you."***

I...I don't know-

What did they know?

He tried hard, just as much as any of those assholes. He didn't like being this way, it wasn't his fault-

"Dash, dude, you okay?" A hand was touching him, coming from the right of him, but he sucked in a breath, releasing his lip from his lip to discover that the taste of blood had filled his mouth, the warm substance dribbling down his chin. The source of the hand was insistent, and it remained even as he squirmed in his seat at the touch.

It was squeezing too hard, too long. He...he didn't like that feeling.

He wanted him to stop touching him.

"Oh, uh, yeah. I'm good. Just trying to stay awake; went to a party last night, you know how it goes." Cocking that smiling, that deplorable, stupid smile, he heard his teacher speak once more; the teen could practically hear how displeased his teacher was.

"Mr. Baxter, please see me after class." As if looking at a car accident, Kwan shook his head, face remaining stock still as he went about listening to the lesson.

Dash laid his head back in his arms, watching the clock lumber by, not feeling up for talking much more.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments

that you wish.
Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.

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Short key:

* Bolded text - The voices

* Underlined text - Thoughts or monologues

* Italicized text - Whispered lines

## 4. Journal Entry #01 - September 7th, 2004

**Summary for the Chapter:**

Just a few days after the first day back to school, though Dash doesn't have much to say.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.

To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)

Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.

Thank you.

*September 7th, 2004*

*I haven't really been feeling too good these last few days; it's not like I haven't felt this or anything before, but this feels weird, you know?*

*I don't really feel like myself, I guess.*

*I want to take my mind off of it, but sitting at home with Mom and Dad doesn't really help since, well, nevermind. Maybe I could call up Kwan or Star? Anyone would work, but I can't think straight.*

*My body hurts, and...*

*Whatever, it's fine. Probably just a cold or something. I can handle that, can't I?*

*I'm just really happy to be able to see them again. It was a really, really long summer, and it's really nice when you have something to take your mind off of the serious stuff.*

*It hurts a little less, you know?*

*I wonder if Kwan and everyone else would be up for going to the mall...*

**Notes for the Chapter:**

This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.

## 5. Chapter 4 - Quickie

**Summary for the Chapter:**

> He was on his way to lunch when he remembered something, taken aback to just a few moments before.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.
>
> To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)
>
> Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.
>
> Thank you.

Boundless students filtered in from the entrances, not that their cafeteria was all that big. Looking in, the dull flicker of fluorescent lights above wasn't kind on the eyes, the school itself bearing the brunt of its age, progressively worse as the years carried on. Some would say that that was the worse part, or the food, that bordered on inedible for the average student, most of it barely put together meals for a fraction of the cost. As a matter of factor, most of the students didn't even eat the lunch, often the case of others bringing their own food, and for the fewer, still, they simply refused to eat it.

But to Dash, it was Paradise. The chance for a meal apart from the meager scraps that he usually got his hands on, well, it was just too good to pass up.

It was much more than he could say that he got at home.

Stomach grumbling loudly to the aroma permeating from the room, he didn't hesitate to step forward into the opening of the cafeteria, subconsciously minding the craning of necks in his direction, with few even pointing to him, to what they said escaped him.

Steeling himself against the brush of cool air circulating around him, he entered the room, scanning the room for the four others in his party. After a moment he clenched his first, feeling himself crumple at the sensation of being stared at, all the while crumple of paper in his hand captured his attention, spreading it out to look at the words upon it (not having had the chance to look at it up until this point, or simply not wanting to).

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That bell was just as irritating as he remembered it, the shrill and unyielding scream of the siren working into his ears, forcing him to loose a groan into the crook of the arm that he laid upon,  but for his peers, it seemed all the more relieving to the other students, all of whom stood from their chairs. Idle chatter, from what he could hear began almost immediately, along with the slamming of lockers and the faint aroma of food distantly making Dash salivate at the notion, though one look at the older man just a few meters away from his desk, rummaging through the files and papers that sat before him, the boy knew that he wouldn't be leaving with them. Beside Dash, Kwan didn't move for a bit, plastered to something on his cellphone's

screen with hands, careful and considerate of the delicate buttons his phones had, but he continued intently clicking away. *Tap*, *tap*, he went, chuckling quietly to himself, and with a well-meaning shrug he stood, barely looking Dash's way before leaving the classroom with a quick goodbye to Falluca. For upwards to a minute passed, the shuffling of paper, the scrawling of pen to the page, filling the quiet space as the teen waited with an accepting sigh, placing his head back in his arm and adjusting his body in the chair, the throbbing lessened though still bothersome, but nothing he couldn't cope with.

His eyelids had just begun to flutter close when Falluca cleared his throat, capturing the boy's undivided attention.

Calling him to the front of the room was that nasally voice, but it didn't hold that warm cadence it did with most others.

It was cold, beckoning him from what felt like miles ahead, the muscles of his lower back making urging him to give pause, though he stood up anyway, closing the distance between them (doing his best to hide his limp) until he was stopped by Falluca, holding up his hand in a simple stopping gesture, no words to be said, leaving him standing there for those few, awkward, tense moments.

"You do know why I have asked you to stay behind, don't you, Mr. Baxter?" Of course he did, looking at the stack of finely graded, printed sheets of the other students' work in comparison, and next to them, his own sloppy notebook paper; the contrast would have been comedic if it weren't so fuckin' pitiful.

"Yeah, I, uh...I guess I do. I'm assuming it has somethin' to do with that, right?" Pointing to the ragged sheets in his teacher's hands, the former having picked them up following his question; the older man

sighed before setting them upon the desk, the ugly shapes of red marker lining his eyes before he read what it said.

F.

"Now, you see, Mr. Baxter, you've put me in a pretty tight spot here. You can *clearly* see why I had to give you the grade that I did, right? I can't say that I was asking too much of you all when I gave you that assignment last year...not even mentioning that you've had the entire summer to complete it, so I am not sure why it is that it remains incomplete." Trailing off, the man looked at him over the rim of his glasses with one thick, raised eyebrow, training his vision on the averted blues that wavered with no answer.

No, it wasn't too much to ask, was it?

For a moment, he trained his eyes about the classroom, skimming along various papers and posters, most bearing some version of a math-based pun, a tip or trick, or the like, with many going the head of the latter. Evenly spaced-out desks allowed the students a bit of foot room to lean into the aisle, but not much more than that. Turning back around, Falluca looked impatient, with what called him back being the indignant tap of his pen against the mottled but polished wood. It was angry at him, those small but piercing eyes making him feel tiny, unconsciously shrinking back as his eyes traveled anywhere but where the little pinpricks of green lied.

"N-no, sir...it wasn't too much-," Falluca stepped in on the next breath, voice still low, but with a sharpness that made Dash flinch.

"Then why, pray-tell, do I not have your assignment in my hand? Surely it wouldn't have been great, but something is definitely better than what you have given me." He was right, Dash knew it to be so. The boy just nodded, still looking away, not realizing that Falluca had paused to give him time to speak. Clearing his throat was the indication though, the glasses-clad man squinting his eyes in exasperation at the pace of their conversation.

"U-uh, I...I don't know. I just didn't get the chance to...didn't...didn't...," What was he supposed to say? Biting his lip, he remained silent, still as he heard the much smaller man, though he was walking away from him to close the blinds and shut the door, and Dash's mind clicked.

Oh.

So that's what he wanted.

Even if it wasn't Daddy, he didn't think it made a difference, right?

Punishment was punishment, no matter who was giving it.

**'Are you gonna suck him off?'**

**'You should do that; maybe he'll fix your grade if you make him feel good.'**

Setting his bag upon the ground, it felt strange to have his body move on its own, unbuckling his belt and moving to unbutton his pants.

But Falluca's voice held him there, and he froze, looking up but not into his eyes.

"Um, Mr. Baxter? What are you doing?" The man, having begun to open up drawer behind his desk, a stack of papers in hand, stopping as well to glower at the loosened state of his pants.

Dash walked forward, pressing up against the older man, his hands traveling the length of his chest before settling on his groin, rubbing against it until he reached up to unsnap the clip holding his trousers up. With his free hand, Dash reached into his own pants, stroking his own flesh until it began to swell, huffing out a gasp as he felt Falluca's arm brush against his chest...

...all before he lost his balance, falling on his bottom for the second time that day.

The throbbing didn't last so long this time, but Dash couldn't help but look up at him, the flustered man distinctly looking to him at all.

Wasn't he going to...?

"I don't...I don't understand. I didn't do the assignment, so I just thought...-," Slamming the papers upon the desk, Falluca took a deep breath, sighing before he spoke.

"Michael, I assure you, whatever it is that you've cooked up in that noggin of yours, I am not interested in the slightest. I'm not sure I want to assume what you're implying, but I am sure that I would like you to collect yourself." Adjusting his glasses, he continued, voice lower, and from he could tell, rushing to button up his pants as he listened, face burning with such embarrassment that his head began to throb, stomach gurgling with such an unsettled twinge that its contents, however sparse, threatened to spill from his mouth.

How could he so stupid?

"Now, this can be filed under sexual harassment, as I'm sure you're aware. Let this be the first *and* last time you even *think* of attempting something like that *ever* again." Taking a shallow breath, he opened up the first drawer to his left, removing from it a small, pink slip and scrawling with handwriting he couldn't make out. It was thrust at him before he could finish his thought, not that he could remember what it was, slid across the desk with a heavy.

"Here, take this. You'll be serving your detention elsewhere in the school. Whatever discussion we were going to have regarding your grades and the means in which you could make it up are null now. At the very least, you could stand to control yourself, Mr. Baxter." At no point did Falluca look at him.

He couldn't blame him.

He was disgusting, after all.

A filthy thing that didn't even know how to do anything.

Using the same hand that held his slip, he made an effort towards the door, he was stopped once more, but this time, he didn't even look behind him.

Not when he knew how he would be looking at him.

"And by the way, perhaps you would do well to remove your hand from your trousers. It looks...distasteful."

If he could have died right there, he was sure he definitely would have. Snatching his hand from his pants, the teen stared at his palm, slick with sweat and precum that dripped from between his fingers. For a moment, his hand traveled to his shirt, mentally noting he would smell too bad if he did wipe it away right then and there.

**'Yeah, it shouldn't matter too much.'**

**'It's not as if you smelled good anyway.'**

It seemed as though the older man had some sort of foresight, stopping him just short of doing so, though he couldn't, for the life of him, understand why it would matter if he did or not. It wasn't as if this shirt was clean or anything.

"Oh, for the love of- please, Mr. Baxter, refrain from doing whatever it is you were about to. Please, go wash your hands." Planting his fingers to his bridge, he looked thoroughly tired, waving him away before rushing to the door to open it for him.

Leaving without a word, Dash hadn't seen the large shape in front of him, shaped very distinctly formed to be a human, his rushing ears and pounding heart stripping away his focus. Looking up a bit, Lancer was standing there, Falluca was still holding open the door, and only then, looking over his shoulder at the awkward cough (not to mention that his pants were unsnapped and his hair was in a tizzy; it was exactly how it looked) that broke the silence between them. It didn't take much to notice the former cupping a hand over his belt, sweeping back his hair with a shaky grip, though a few strands still stuck out like the bristles of a used brush. Lancer didn't seem to notice though, or at least he pretended not to, leaning forward to clap a hand over Falluca's shoulder in jest.

"My, I hope you two were okay in there; I heard the commotion a few doors down so I came to make sure everything was okay...," His tone was well-meaning, warm, even, framed by an earnest smile that one would rarely see on the face of the older man. It should have worked to quell his nerves, to soften the desperate patter of the muscle in his chest that worked to keep him upright, and in some ways, it did, the teen noticing the way that his shoulders relaxed despite their close proximity. If anything, Lancer was shrewd, but overall they always got along well.

So why did his skin crawl under his gaze?

It felt *just* like when Daddy looked at him...and when Mommy did, too...

"No, no, we're fine. We were just having a rather...heated discussion about an assignment that was due. Nothing to be alarmed for." Even Dash could tell that the crooked smile on his lips took a lot to keep up, much the same way he did.

His stomach still twisted with disgust at himself.

"Oh, is that so? Well, perhaps I was mistaken...though," Lancer locked onto the loose pink slip in the teen's hands.

"...it looks as though you've already seen some trouble, and so soon in the year, too." He was right.

Completely right.

Despite not having said anything, Falluca nodding agreeably, his beady eyes firmly set on the other, only occasionally flickering to Dash, as if to ask "Why are you still here?".

That was a wonderful question.

"I-I'm sorry...I just...I need to go to the bathroom. May I please go, sir?"

**'Wow, spoken like the little bitch that you are.'**

I'm not a bitch. I'm...I'm not-

"Oh, I'm sorry. I completely forgot about lunch because of my rambling. Would you like for me to walk you?"

Everything in this seemed strange, at least to the un-estranged mind, one that would acknowledge the signs, the tone of his voice. In some way, Dash could feel this himself, a firm hand on his shoulder lingering for just too long, the look in the older man's eyes half-lidded and strange under the blinding light of the hallway's lamps, flickering imperceptibly fast but it was disorienting. If anything, Falluca could probably see it too, or maybe he couldn't through the impatient tap of his finger on the knobs.

Of, right. He must not be able to stand being near him.

He couldn't really blame him.

Flashing a grin, though it didn't feel nearly as bright as it usually did, the teen agreed to it, lowering his dirty hand just in case he touched anything.

It didn't occur to him that he could have walked himself, that he was more than capable of doing so.

That it was just a bit strange that a teacher wanted to walk him there at all.

Perhaps he knew this but didn't want to anger him.

The two of them made their way to the closest restroom, just around the corner from Falluca's room, and upon entry, he surveyed the pristine, tiled room, dropping his bag upon the ground and placing the slip onto the sink as he went towards the urinal, realizing that he needed to use the bathroom. Four lined the back wall, most clean though some sport the odd nick from age and use, though Dash was aware of the rowdiness of the boys here when breaks arose, having spent a great deal of time here when he found a reason to get out of class.

Standing in the furthest one, his pants were unzipped to reveal his still hardened member, throbbing with each and every touch he made to it. Sucking in his teeth much louder than he intended to, trying to stifle the moan that bubbled past his teeth.

This wasn't going to work.

There was no way he was going to get through the day like...this.

"Dash, are you doing alright? I heard you and I wasn't sure if you wanted me to come in or not. Need a bit of help?" Footsteps clicked and clacked on the tiled floor a bit away, Dash froze, keeping his head down as the sounds ceased, cocking his eye over to the man at

the entrance who'd leaned onto the wall.

"I'm...I'm good!" God, why was this happening?

If only he could have just...

"Are you sure? I could come over there to help out, if you need me to. I don't mind." The footsteps edged closer, almost painfully slowly, though time appeared to rush with it, barreling down upon him.

**'Look at you. Honestly, you should just let him fuck you; maybe then you could get rid of this little...problem...'**

**'You just can't help yourself, can you? You little slut.'**

He was trying, he really was, he remarked to the voices who only laughed in return.

Couldn't they at *least* give him that?

"Can't you guys help me? Come on, please?" The teen wondered desperately, writhing as his flesh begged to be touched.

Nothing.

It always seemed as though, in his mind with a bitter click of his tongue, that despite taking up so many of his thoughts, his feelings, his emotions, all they seemed to give back was agitation and strife. Though frankly, he realized with odd clarity, it was beginning to get a bit hard to tell whether it was his own thoughts or the voices speaking to him at times.

Yet, strangely enough, that didn't bother him nearly as much as it should have.

Just silence apart from the closing gap between the two, resonating as deafening footfalls in the lonely bathroom the two just happened to share.

"I can't...I can't let him see me like this. I've already messed up enough for today, but what am I supposed to do-"

Of course.

Why hadn't he thought of it before?

Eying the loose garments around his thighs, a slight of hand, caught through careful fingers, brought his underwear and pants back up, and into them, he shoved his throbbing member, shuddering at the barely kept moan that tumbled past his lips, hoping against hope that it hadn't fallen onto his teacher's ears.

Rushing to zip his trousers, it was just as Lancer had happened behind him, wide smile upon his face that he'd went to flush the urinal, peering behind and up his shoulder at the large form of his teacher who'd, through this, appeared to be looking for something.

Returning the grin, Dash spoke, wincing at a sudden crack in his voice, but again, Lancer hadn't appeared to notice.

"Ah, uh, hey, Teach. Sorry, the urinal wouldn't, you know, flush. Didn't mean to make ya wait or anythin'." Closing his eyes with a modest rub of the back of his head, Dash tried his best to ignore the crushing sensation down below, but more Lancer, standing behind him, but not having moved.

Those green eyes never ceased their movement, never stopped looking, but not before landing on the teen to regard him for a moment. It was several intense moments later when he spoke, grin returning.

"Ah, yes. That must have been it. I take everything was okay otherwise?" Nodding, Dash squirmed again.

This wasn't exactly what he would call okay.

But he deserved it, didn't he?

He should be glad he was getting punished; it was the least that he could do.

"Well, in that case...I suppose we should go. Though, there is just one last thing...," Leaning forward to whisper into the boy's early, the sudden image of his father appeared, harsh purrs and bites to his sensitive lobe making him involuntarily chew on his lip, despite its darkened color from before.

*Daddy, please...d-don't...*

"Perhaps you should be a bit more careful about how loud you carry out your affairs. Be glad that it was only me that was walking by when you two had your little...talk." Back away, he left the boy with a firm pat on the shoulder before leaving the bathroom, the bathroom left with nothing more than the listless drip of the sink faucet and the panicked breathing of the youth, leaning on the urinal for support.

**'He knows, he knows!'**

**'What will you do? You can't tell anyone else about this, you know? You could be in big trouble if you do...'**

**"What if he says something? This is all your fault!'**

Just five minutes.

Just five minutes without *them* chiming in.

He needed to think.

Just *five* minutes.

Just a little time.

*Please* just shut up.

Shut up.

Shut Up.

SHUT UP!

**---- (Warning here for Self-Harm; please skip at your leisure) ----**

The warmth dripping down his wrists, splattering through the noises of the sounds between his ears was the one thing that called him back, wavering at the sight of his nails digging into his skin. Fresh buds of crimson bubbled to the surface, deep, coursing lines drawn by hand crisscrossed along his forearm in a marriage of inflamed anger. It stung, it burned, moving it sending deep jitters along the rest of his arm, though it was nothing that he couldn't handle.

Nothing that he hadn't before.

The voices were saying something, he thought, looking towards the ceiling only to realize that he had sunken to the ground at some point, nestled by the urinal in the corner.

Distantly, this reminded him of a memory, an occasion years ago that forebear the same result, the stench of pennies in his nose so familiar that he ought to believe that he had been there all along.

But he wasn't.

He was here, bent over a urinal in the bathroom of his school, though it felt largely the same.

The voices were yelling at him, saying those mean things, he guessed, the weariness in his eyes making him want to fall asleep and not mind the cacophony of noise between his ears.

*"Would that be so bad? If I could sleep, just like this?"* A buzz from his back pocket roused him, and in pulling it out, there were texts, many from Kwan that seemed to yell at him, too.

*"They sound mad. I forgot it was lunchtime."* It was sort of comedic hearing his stomach grumble a reminder to him, the pitless ache of hunger pulling him to stand.

**---- (Continue here if you skipped) ----**

It only took a few paper towels to ease the bleeding, though some had gotten on his pants, sprinkling water on them a bit, but not really trying to rub out the stain.

"Whatever. It's fine; if someone asks, it was a paper cut."

Gathering his things, Dash didn't notice the speckles of blood left smeared where he had been sitting, having forgotten all about washing his hands.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
> Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next

chapter.

## 6. Lunchroom Blues

**Summary for the Chapter:**

> Another lunch going unfed, and one spent where his paranoia reigns.
>
> Despite not having not seen his friends for a while, another student catches his eye.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.
>
> To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)
>
> Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.
>
> Thank you.

They were at their usual spot, nestled just in the center as if performance was to be made, so looking wasn't an issue, and he grasped the paper in his hand harder, crunching it in his fist and shoving it into the left pocket of his jacket, the other too worn to do so.

They didn't seem to notice him at first, amongst the noise, the

chatter.

Dash, gripping a bag, swung it over his bag and breathed a long sigh; though he hadn't stopped, it was hard to move, his pants too tight.

"It's fine. Everything is fine. If I just ignore it, everything will be great and cool and awesome. I just need to sit down, maybe." Watching them from here, it almost seemed strange not to see himself with them, but at the same time... it almost seemed...right.

---

It was for a split second that he'd looked down at himself, combing his own clothing for the flawless touches the other in his group always seemed to have. Even as kids, he noticed their pretty hair and their pretty clothes; Kwan, Star, Paulina, and Dale were so shiny to him, and that hadn't changed or anything with age. At some point in his youth, he could vaguely recall asking, in his insecurity, if they thought that he was pretty, too.

His Mommy and Daddy liked to tell him he was ugly, and sure, he believed it, how could he not when he looked like this? His eyes looked like a goldfish's, his hair was too greasy, he smelled bad; the answer was already made blindly clear, but somewhere in him, he hoped that maybe it wasn't true, though, the voices always seemed to remind him, Daddy and his friends did think he was pretty when they...

Well, anyway, they all looked at each other and shrugged, making slight comments about how he always smelled really weird, how his teeth were crooked, the way his eyes were always red and stuff (nothing he didn't already know).

They said they didn't know.

Well, at least some of them.

If there was one thing that he could praise Paulina for, it was her honesty.

Though, frankly, it shouldn't have hurt as much as it did, but her telling him that she thought that he looked like a rat felt like hot, burning oil had been poured over his skin.

He shouldn't have been surprised when the others laughed, heck, he laughed, too, but he didn't know if he found it particularly funny. It just didn't seem right to frown, even if he wanted to.

It didn't seem right to cry, even if he wanted to.

His friends thought that it was funny, so he did too, even if his heart seemed to shatter because of it.

---

Walking up to them, Dash could feel how out of place he was.

He didn't fit in here.

He wasn't pretty enough.

The four waved and watched him sit, and the teen laid his items along the ground beside them, allowing them to drop with a hapless thump before opening it and rummaging through its contents, taking the slip from his pocket and throwing it into the deepest corner the bag could manage, closing it up and sealing it back.

*Why am I so ugly?*

**'Mommy and Daddy are gonna be so mad when they find out about that?.**

**'You deserve to be hit. I don't think you get it, do you?'**

"Yeah, I do." His smile faltered a bit.

"Yo, Dash! Where were you, man? We were waiting for you, but you missed, like, half of lunch." Dale was speaking to him, taking up the leftover core of an apple in his hand and tossing it at Dash who hadn't had enough time to dodge it, thrumming against his forehead in an almost comedic way, and the others laughed, and laughed, and laughed.

They liked doing that.

Dash liked it, too, he thought, going to pick up the apple core to toss back, at least, that's what he thought he should do, but his stomach said otherwise, gazing with wide eyes at the faint scent of apple, the chunks leftover appearing as spun silk in his hands. Turned away from the table, the core having bobbed and weaved onto the floor behind their table, they couldn't see him as well, and thank goodness for it.

He was so hungry.

So *fucking* hungry that he seemed ready to just about eat himself.

"I could take this with me, and plus, I have those peanuts in my bag. Those should work, right?" Sticking the apple core in his bag, not minding the saliva that smeared onto the jacket (probably Dale's, Dash reasoned), he dug into his bag's front pocket to reveal the scant amount of nuts in that little baggy, itself clouded with filth that even the teen couldn't identify.

He was fine with it, though the others, noticing the small rations and the bag it had come in, chuckled at it, though none of them went to touch it.

It was probably too dirty for them.

"Eating light again, huh? You act as though you don't like food or somethin'." It was Dale, again.

Star chimed in, a coy smile plastered on her features.

"Yeah, you always bring weird stuff to lunch: bread, crackers, hell, I think you brought something like tuna fish one time, right Kwan? That was so weird." They all laughed.

Laughing, laughing, laughing as he crunched the meager portions in his fist.

Yeah, that was weird, wasn't it?

But he couldn't manage much more than this, most times less.

His parents worked really hard, and they liked to buy things to feel good and stuff, so he tried not to ask them for money. Though they usually hit him when he did, you know?

Not that it was their fault or anything.

They had already given him so much, so much more than he could ask for, so he was mostly mad at himself for asking; how could he have been so selfish?

They were trying their hardest, and here he was, thinking about himself.

So he found what he could, and he brought it with him. Scraps, odds, and ends that he could find at home, some in the cafeteria when students left their trays on the tables (though that was a bit harder when his friends or teachers were around), and sometimes, just sometimes, he could find so pretty good stuff in the trash cans around the school. Candy wrappers, leftover sandwiches, even full fruits if he were lucky.

"Yeah, I guess. Hey, Dash...," Kwan was looking at him, staring at him. His eyes darted from the peanuts back to him, and the peanuts again.

"...do you want me to see if the lines are still open? I could get you something. Like, some chips or something?" Immediately, Paulina chimed in, her face worn with mild annoyance.

"Kwan, you did that basically every day last year. Please don't tell me that you're gonna do it again? Like, it shouldn't be going around begging people to feed him or whatever when he can do it himself." Star nodded her head, sipping on a can of soda before placing it back onto the table.

Begging people?

He had never...he would never...

Clutching the bag in his harder, he bit his lip again.

Kwan had always done it because he asked him, not the other way around, and believe him, he didn't like it when he did.

He didn't want him to help.

He didn't like to feel the way he did right now.

Needy...pitied.

He hated pity.

He didn't want it.

"Guys, look, it's fine. I want to do this. So, did you want me to-"

"Nope, I'm good. I've got somethin' right here, and I'm not really that hungry anyway." That wasn't true at all.

He felt ill, absolutely fucking sick with hunger.

For a second, he almost considered caving and taking his offer.

But there was no reason to act as pathetic as he looked, and besides, it wasn't as if he deserved the help.

"I mean, if you're sure, then fine, I guess." Turning back to the others, Kwan didn't look back at him, but Dash didn't miss the expression on his face.

He never did.

Not when it could be the difference of him getting beaten to a bloody pulp or getting what he figured was a slap on the wrist.

No, he couldn't miss those sorts of things.

So why did he look disgusted with him?

"Anyway, before you came, we were just catching up on what we did during the summer. You missed some of it, so did you want to hang out afterschool? Paulina and I totally nailed our beauty exams, and Kwan is super confident that he's gonna ace the SAT this year. There's so much to talk about!" She finished with a flick of her hair, and they all looked at him expectantly.

Stared at him as his jaw clenched, biting that same lip that became sore under his teeth.

"No, no. I can't do that today. I'm already going to be in trouble as it

is. What am I gonna do?" Rubbing his wrists, his eyes tracked the successive faces of his peers.

He could lie.

That would be easiest, wouldn't it?

**'Yeah, do that!? If you do, then they'll leave you alone.'**

**'It's not like you wouldn't get in trouble anyway. Daddy's gonna fuck you up; might as well have fun with it.'**

But...they were his friends. The last thing he would want to do is lie, and he wanted to go; it had been an entire summer since the last time they'd seen or talked. Who knew when they would see each other next?

But Mommy and Daddy would be mad.

Really, really mad.

He couldn't...he couldn't keep them waiting.

Not when they would be coming today. It was too important.

"Uh, actually, guys, I have to...stay after. Detention in ISS today for,-" A flash of his attempt on Falluca flashed across his eyes.

"...for not turning in a project or somethin'. It's dumb." Chuckling, he watched them, though his arms itched with anxiety at their silence, there was something out of the corner of his eye that captured his attention, something more than the odd, disjointed murmur of his heart. Even amongst the sea of faces around him, he spotted a familiar mop of black hair, shaggy and fluffed with an exuberance that he could feel from here. It didn't take much to trek down to his fair, perfect skin to find a matching set of baby blues framed with a light, airy smile. Beside him, there were two others, but they didn't strike his interest, though they looked happy, too.

He knew that face, that smile, too well, and his name manifested on his lips as a loose grin.

Daniel Fenton.

The three were taking their trays up, stopping for a moment to rave about something, probably a nerd thing or whatever, the back of his mind played absently. He didn't care about how they almost seemed to jump with excitement around one another, how they were together all of the time, or how, even when he...when he picked on them...they always stuck together.

It must have been...nice.

What?

Ugh, what was he thinking? He didn't care about that; he had what he wanted, and more than those...those losers.

Which is exactly why he looked away, even when his body resisted, and his grin wilted just a bit.

"Detention? Dude, you somehow manage to fuck up even when you've only been here for what? A day? You've gotta do better." Dale picked through his teeth, smirking at Dash's scoff, though he didn't notice the irritable furrow of the former's brow.

"Yeah. I thought we supposed to do that over the summer? That was too easy, and I don't even like math." Paulina and Star nodded in unison, taking notice of one another's nails and complimenting one another, no longer minding the increasingly deepening frown across the table, plastered to Dash's face.

**'Yeah, it was too easy. Too bad you're too dumb to do something like that. You would have failed on the spot.'**

**'You could have tried harder. Someone would have helped-'**

*No one can help. No on e ever helps.*

None of them did, and thank goodness; his grip on his own arm was beginning to hurt.

"It was...it was dumb, so I didn't do it. Like hell I was gonna waste my time doing something like finding a shell or somethin'." Releasing his arm, Dash smoothed back his hair with a shaky hand, closing his eyes against the sight of his friends' smiles, frowns, and from Kwan?

Pity.

Always that fucking pity that made his stomach hurt and his head ache.

He didn't need it.

He didn't want it.

What made him think that he did? That he liked for people to look at him like a sick puppy?

If he wanted to do the work, he could.

*No, I can't.*

He just didn't do it because it wasn't important to him.

*I wanted to do well, too.*

He could do *anything* that Kwan did.

*I'm too stupid to do anything right.*

*"You know, you're gonna have to start trying a little harder, dude. It's not cool that you don't care."* If he hadn't known any better, he would have thought that he was imagining things and that Kwan wasn't saying that just a hair's breadth away. He couldn't fathom that the other would say that, so his mind, his spirit, denied it. He had to deny it to stop the itch.

He did try.

What did he know?

"Well, whatever. Maybe we can hang out sometime this week?" Kwan didn't say anything; his fingers fiddled with the strap of his perfect bag with his perfect books with his perfect everything.

Everything was perfect with Kwan.

Kwan was perfect.

How could he stand to be around him?

"I, uh...I guess so, yeah. I'd have to check with Dadd- I mean my Dad. My Dad; I'll have to check with my...Dad...and my Mom, too..." Dash felt his stomach churn with fear at the thought.

He didn't like asking them for things.

It made them...angry.

He didn't like when they were angry.

"Cool." Dale stopped, the lunch bell screaming through the halls, reverberating throughout the room and sending the student body to their feet in a collective motion, made habitual through time. Picking up his bag, just as the others had, they all headed towards the doors, though Dash lagged behind, not that they had noticed. Azure blue eyes sifted through the sea of bodies until he fell upon them, those bright, baby blues. They burned into him for a split second, almost as if they had been searching for his, too.

At the meeting, Danny's eyes averted to Sam as he grasped her hand (he could see it, despite the density of students about them), laughing with Tucker as they, too, found their way back to the hallway, filtering through the crowd until they flitted from view.

**'You were staring for too long.'**

**'He knew that you were watching him'**

**'Why are you such a creep?'**

"I'm not a creep! I just happened to look over there, that's all...," Looking down at his phone, Dash had a picture of the halfa, those blue eyes again looking at him, through him.

His pants were tight, again.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
> Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.

# 7. Homeward bound

**Summary for the Chapter:**

> Detention is served, but Daddy isn't happy. Not at all. They were expecting guests, and he nearly missed them.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.
>
> To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)
>
> Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.
>
> Thank you.

Slowly, dreadfully, unbearably slowly, the time idled along on hands coated with molasses, cutting and chiming in a steady but draining rhythm grating on the last nerve that he could give. Its cadence, tingling with fervent anxiety, the dark murk of the ISS room (just leaving him with too much room for the imagination to roam. The lady in the room with him didn't look, didn't notice him; typing away and filing papers must have enthralled her much more than the nervous tick that infested his legs. They shook and shook some more, but he didn't have it in him to stop, not when time just went...so...slowly.

Too slowly.

So...slowly.

The room around him wasn't exactly helping, either. Around him, the pointing fingers of posters and motivational words narrowed down on him, and the many awards and odd looks of people shaking hands, smiling; all things that made him cringe. They looked so happy standing there, staring at him...*mocking* him. He could remember so vividly the hundred or so times someone (most of the time a teacher or another student) to just "try harder", "do better", or, his favorite, the infamous "just believe in yourself", or something dumb like that.

He believed it, of course, being a kid and everything; you feel like anything could be yours if you just tried hard enough and did good things, you know? It didn't make sense for that not to be the case, not when all the people he knew told him that. That was how things went, and people who did bad things went away and didn't get what they wanted.

It felt nice, for a while.

He did his work (to the best of his ability, though that didn't mean he did well), he raised his hand, made nice with other students.

He tried.

He really, really did.

But it wasn't good enough.

Grades came back as F's, student conferences called, and detentions served, but the result wouldn't change. Not when to Dash, the words were becoming longer, the math appearing more as gibberish than actual numbers; it was hard enough trying to work through the chapter books that they handed out since his brain just wouldn't let him stay still.

So when his parents would inevitably ask why he couldn't do it, why he just couldn't do what he needed to, the boy didn't know how to answer them.

Conferences were spent with them yelling at his teachers, insisting that he didn't need any help, that individual learning plans wouldn't do anything for a lazy sack of shit like him, and to be honest, he couldn't say he disagreed. His heart was having a bit of trouble sticking it out, a part of him didn't know if he could keep it up, trying but failing each and every time to see something change, see something, anything, improve. Slowly, but surely, his wish to try dissolved, and so did the patience of his parents who'd taken quite the stance yelling at him every chance they got, it wasn't long until they got physical...

Really physical.

It made him wonder if there was something wrong with him, you know?

What if believing yourself wasn't enough?

That some people just can't do some things, that some people aren't as good as others.

That no matter how hard you tried, or how much you wanted something, you just...you just couldn't do it?

And what if...

...What if *he* was one of those people?

Looking down at the stack of papers on his desk, he guessed he should be thanking Falluca even giving him a chance to work through another assignment, to make up for his last. That, even despite what he di- tried - to do, he still helped him.

He would have smiled if he didn't feel so bitter.

Kwan didn't struggle with this.

Dale didn't.

Neither did Star, or Paulina, or a lot of people in the school.

At least, he thought so.

He knew a lot of people went through something like this, just like this, and it made it sting more that they would feel the same way that he did.

He wasn't alone in these feelings.

It just felt as though he was.

And that was enough for him to slip the papers into the bin next to his desk.

**'Wow, you didn't even try, did you? Not even something literally being handed to you wasn't enough for you.'**

**'What are you doing, dummy? Aren't you gonna do the assignment?'**

**'Stupid!'**

**'Idiot! You should give up, not that it's hard for you.'**

Fuckwit.

Idiot.

Stupid.

*STUPID.*

"Shut up!" The words just slipped out, spilling from his maw with such visceral anger that his leg, shaking as it had been all along, was sent into the bottom of the desk, jolting him and the clerk from their stupors, though more so the young woman who's bespeckled stare landed on him.

Questioning.

Confused.

Scared.

He hadn't meant to scare her.

"Michael? Are you alright? Who are you speaking to?"

Had he...been speaking out loud all this time?

Had she heard him?

He didn't mean it.

He was trying.

He was.

*Please...please don't punish me.*

"I-I'm sorry, sorry...I didn't mean to, I didn't...I didn't-," Just like that, the chime of the tiny alarm on her desk rang clear, and Dash couldn't have left any faster, a swift grab of his bag, and a silent departure later, Dash soared from the room and towards the exit of the school, breezing (though his limp still hampered his movements) through the halls until he was met with the cool brush of air across his face.

Again, those chilled autumn hands nipped at his ankles, he didn't have a moment to waste. Not a single second as he wavered off the beaten path, and back along the woodland trail, careful to avoid the still tent that dotted the landscape in the distance, though he had to

squint just to see it, the dense foliage doing a fairly good job of concealing the creature the rested inside.

She was safe.

She was there.

She was okay.

That much...that much he knew.

He didn't bother to take out his phone, knowing very well from the dipping plate of the sun over the amber trees around his home that he was late.

Very, very late.

It wasn't until he'd come to the scraggly concrete and asphalt of the mobile home park he'd come to know that he felt himself slow down, if only by a little.

Though, he wouldn't exactly say he'd come to love it, either.

Past the throttled trailers of the others on his lot, storming down the way until he made it to his own, that familiar, water-stained paneling

and shoddy grass, and that dark, unbridled rage that sat settled upon his father's face, as well as that of the other four faces that stood around the older man; the teen found himself utterly frozen, stock-still despite the thundering footfalls that collapsed the sparse sprouts that poked through the cracks in the pavement below them.

He couldn't move...couldn't breathe.

Not even as Allen threw his bottle at him, the fogged glass colliding with his chest before rebounding into the glass, did he move, though this appeared to amuse some of them, chorus laughter ringing on deaf ears, though he couldn't quite pinpoint which one of the men it was.

He didn't look up, even when the must of alcohol and tobacco burned his nostrils.

"Now, what I tell you a specific time to get your ass back here, that wasn't a goddamn invitation to take your sweet old time, was it, boy?" The older man hummed, leaning in as close as he could into the boy's ears, though he easily towered over the teen; through craggy teeth, he smiled and yellow eyes he watched his son stand there before taking up a portion of Dash's shirt in his grip, throttling him so violently that the former could hardly keep up, stumbling about clumsily as his backside whined.

"Then why the hell are you back so late, huh?! What makes you think that you got the right to make these fine fellas fuckin' wait? Where the fuck were you?" Barely standing, the boy could only whisper, throat too tight to above that. He couldn't manage much more than,

it seemed, burning tears itching the corner of his eyes as he spotted the figure of his mother leaned against the doorway of their trailer.

"I-I...I had-," Another shake, another throttle; Dad was getting impatient.

Very impatient.

"Dash, if you don't get on with goddamn point already, I'm gonna make it so you wish you had. I ain't got all day!" The men behind him looked tired, irritated; they spoke amongst themselves with the occasional glance in his direction, and the boy couldn't help the twinge of guilt that made him retreat lower into his jacket.

He'd made them wait.

It was all his fault that they were upset.

Now Daddy was upset, too.

"I h-had detention. I didn't finish an assignment, and my teacher talked to me so I stayed a-after and-," He couldn't even the words before he felt them, burning eyes that threatened to lose his bladder right then and there; so malignant and engrossing were those eyes, the eyes he knew so well, that anything the boy thought he was going to say beyond that fizzled out on his tongue, flinching at the harsh, unyielding boom of his father's voice.

It made him want to scream when he did that, when his face got red and his beady eyes scanned him like an open book like nothing lied behind his eyes but fear and anguish as he tried to run from his gaze.

But he couldn't.

He never could.

"Why the hell do we have to keep talkin' about the same shit, over and over again, you fuckin' idiot?! Why didn't you do your work? Sounds to me like we need to have another heart-to-heart if you still ain't doin' what I said." He knew what he meant, he always did, but he made no move to stop him, though the younger couldn't help the shudder that ran through him, not the writhing anguish that made his stomach do twists and turns inside of him. Grunting, Allen all but dragged the boy behind him, Dash, again, struggling to keep up as he was presented to the four men, gazing up at them with wide, deer-like eyes before whimpering at the tightening grip of his father's hand, and the man leaning down to whisper, "We'll have to save that for another time. The least you could do is work to make it up no, ain't that right?".

He didn't wait for an answer.

He'd already known that the boy would say yes.

He always did, the little bitch.

Dash already knew what they wanted him to do, the voices did, too; how could he not when their eyes him with such a profound hunger and need that they practically undressed him right there.

"Sorry about this. This little *shit* still can't seem to do shit right, but I can compensate you a couple of hours if you want. Free of charge." The group seemed to think on this for the odd, tense moment before they accepted it, smirking haughtily at both Allen and Dash, though their gaze was directed mostly at the teen, their collective sights traveling the length of his body before stepping forward. The first of the men, a burly, rugged man who calloused hand grasped at the boy's face and pulled it to and fro, took note of each and every blemish or mark that slew his feature through the smudged makeup on his fingertips. Clicking his tongue, the man, Robert, Dash could remember, leaned forward, hardened brown eyes burning into Dash's own before setting his chapped, charred lips onto the teen's, the taste of tobacco, liquor, and harsh peppermint flooded his senses, sharp and smoky, yet he pushed the urge to vomit aside. Lord only knows what Dad would do if he threw up on a client.

Again.

**'You know why they're here.'**

**'You like this, don't you? Disgusting.'**

**'Are you gonna puke? You should throw up on purpose on purpose so Daddy can beat the shit out of you. Mommy would like that; she would laugh.'**

That would be pretty funny, huh?

Wouldn't it?

He couldn't listen to them, though. He was already in enough trouble as it was. There was no reason to deepen the wound, to make the older man be angrier at him because he messed up again.

***---- (Warning for molestation, non-consensual themes, and sexual assault; please skip if sensitive)---***

A hand, harsh and rough, caressed his bottom, kneading them crudely as he brought their bodies together into a crushing embrace. It was Robert that had brought them together, the older man humming into his mouth as his tongue swished over the former's.

With one last squeeze, Robert released him, licking his lips with a loud moan through stroking the visible print of his pants, gesturing to Allen with a glance though most of his focus was on Dash.

"Yeah, he'll do. You want the money now?" It was more of a

statement than a question, but Allen happily obliged shoving past the younger boy to make his bounty, each man fishing through their wallets to accrue their fare; it wasn't long before a stack of twenties laid bare in his father's palm and were being stuffed into his own pockets. A lone hand pulled him along by his hair (he didn't notice someone had even grabbed it), and distantly, through the haze of the passing sound and fuzzy eyes, the sounds of the trailer door to the backroom, as creaky and loud as he remembered it, swung open and he was pulled inside, the four men following suit.

He could only vaguely make out what his father was saying.

"You've got six hours, one for each of you plus a few more to compensate. Don't rough 'em up too much, that costs extra." Everything felt strange, disconnected.

He didn't feel it as much, like his body wasn't his, and that he was looking at himself, watching, even as Allen spoke, he could hear their zippers, clothes tossed and dropped carelessly to the ground; his own body, sprawled across that stony mattress as the sticky, humid air clung to his skin, the rough, sparse bedding scrapping across his backside. All the same, his dull, blue eyes, wide and unblinking, tracked the whirl of the ceiling fan above his head, distracting him as he felt the first of them enter him.

Dash sometimes thanked his mind, though.

The thrusting didn't feel as invasive, so...distracting. As a matter of fact, he mused, he couldn't feel it at all.

Not even when they touched him and forced themselves inside of him did he blink.

When they loosed themselves inside of him and kissed him did he make a sound, or at least, he thought he wasn't.

He could hear someone crying.

He figured it was him.

He did that a lot.

It was almost surreal, you know?

*He* was safe, even if Dash wasn't.

Was that selfish?

No.

This was fine.

He just didn't think about it.

It's all okay.

It's okay.

okay.

Okay.

OKAY.

...

"That's funny," The boy thought as his eyes tracked the crooked arms of the ceiling fan,"...I don't hear them anymore."

***---- (End of Scene; please proceed to next chapter)----***

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
> Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next

chapter.

## 8. Journal Entry #02 - July 17th, 2004

**Summary for the Chapter:**

Dash ponders on some more stuff on his way to the court.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.

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Thank you.

*July 17th, 2004*

*I was hoping that Kwan would have c alled me, but he hasn't yet. I guess he's just really busy with egghead shit, heh.*

*Going to court isn't as fun when you don't have anyone to play with, but I was able to get some practice in this summer so far, so I'm hoping that by the time the tryouts roll around this year, I'll be ready.*

*Mommy and Daddy don't think I'm good enough to get in though.*

*I'm probably not.*

*I'm not good at much, but I hope that I can. Maybe then I can make them be proud of me.*

*I'm going to the court today to practice.*

**Notes for the Chapter:**

This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.

# 9. Waking for the Second Time

**Summary for the Chapter:**

He wakes up, but he begs for rest.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

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Thank you.

**'Wake up, wake up!'**

**'Can't stay asleep, you'll get caught.'**

**'Disgusting.'**

When he awoke, it was warm, and his mouth was dry, salty.

Not warm as with the embrace of a mother to her child, but the steamy song on an oven, baking him alive even as the ceiling fan, in all of its glory, danced above him, a noticeable squeal from above

making it impossible to fall back to sleep.

Though, it wasn’t as if he’d be able to stay in bed anyway.

No, this wasn't for him. He couldn't stay here too long.

Mommy and Daddy wouldn't like that.

He had half a thought in him to rise from the sheets, yet it was the cold breath of pain that soared along his backside, engulfing his tender body in unyielding flames as he resisted the urge to cry that forced him back down upon the crusted mattress. This was something he knew so well, that pressing throb that wrought through him with intense claws, that, despite the welling pit that seemed to open in his belly, no tears burned at the corner of his eyes. Nothing but the dry stare wrenched firmly towards the ceiling fan that wobbled and shook above his head.

Wobbling, wobbling...

Crying wouldn't make him feel better, and it surely wasn't going to make it go away, whatever this feeling was inside.

Daddy didn't like it when he cried.

He wasn't...he wasn't supposed to...right? It wasn't something that he was supposed to do because they would laugh, even when it hurt,

even when he wanted to scream.

Even when he felt sticky and...unclean...

He was supposed to be quiet, so that's what he was.

But he would be lying if he didn't want to..you know? Aching waves washing over his bottom half with each movement that he made, a rush of pressure behind his eyes threatening to fall, but still, they refused to bud. Everything that he had was placed into pushing up from the bed, shaky arms trembling with warnings of collapse.

But they didn't.

He sat up, scrunching up his nose at the smell of pennies that lingered heavily in the air, sticky blooms of that stench causing him to gag and choke, doubling over just a bit, though the motion made his backache; bile bubbled somewhere deep within in him. Vague touches, like hands upon him, invasive, ghostly, throbbed below, bringing forth a profound shudder that racked his body so thoroughly that his knees began to buckle and shake, motioning to support himself on the wall of the room to keep his body upright.

All the while, the sounds somewhere in his head rattled and chuckled and giggled like storms, murmuring listless mumblings.

Yet all the same, voices were as clear as day.

Grating...whispering...mumbling...

Dash trudged forward, hardly minding the pile of strewn garments that, as he absently noted with a passing thought, he'd been wearing just hours ago, muddled thoughts working at a snail's pace to make sense of the darkroom before him, working with masterful skill to find what he had been looking for. Upon his hands fell a roll of paper towels, faint and yellowed in the low light before him on the kitchen counter, its indifferent shape hanging in the heavy dark. Grabbing a few and turning on the faucet to a light stream, though not before scarcely eying the cracked door illuminating the room from afar, waiting for a few moments as the saturated towel lied in his shaky palm before allowing it to come to a stop; a touch of dish soap on the paper and a nice scrubbing of his hand was all it took to make it fuzz and drip down his hand, soap suds coating the paper towels.

He took it and eyed his down-below, staring long at the sight of thick trails of white that dribbled and dried along his thighs. The teen wasted no time scrubbing, scrubbing away at the grim and filth coating his legs, unable to, despite his best efforts, quiet the sucking of air he made between his teeth as his hands grazed the new slew of darkly colored blotched that dotted his inner thighs and buttocks and even in the absence of light, he could spot them. He knew they were there, and in the same breath, from the murmurs, the whispers grew louder, words like recurrent knives to his skin.

**'God, look at you. You're so fuckin' dirty, heh heh. You'll never get clean if you scrub like that.'**

**'I bet you had a lot of fun. Tons of fun with them fucking you in**

**the ass, didn't you, faggot?'**

**'Slut.'**

**'Dirty whore.'**

"P-please...please just...not right now. Stop, please...", The best he could manage was a soft plea, dotted with cracks that rattled his vocal cords and split dry lips with a trembling frown.

All he needed was a minute to collect his thoughts.

Just one minute.

One...minute.

It was funny.

The last thing he wanted or needed was them confirming what he'd already known.

What he'd always known.

From that first time, on that day so many years ago, when his father wanted to talk to him, alone, in that bedroom, it was something he realized with startling clarity as he begged for him to stop, as he cried for him to stop.

It didn't help.

It never did.

His father was angry, and it was funny because his father called him the same thing.

But it didn't mean it didn't still hurt.

Yet they didn't stop.

Taunting him, laughing as he scrubbed and ground harder and harder, turning his skin bright red through the agitated and bruised surface, but that didn't matter. Not when he could feel them on his skin, under his skin, writhing and wriggling as maggots in a corpse. Just like him, a rotten, rancid sack of meat that could never be clean, never be washed.

Smelly and disgusting, too disgusting to be touched.

Only when shimmering, hot tears trickled like fire down his cheeks

did he stop, wiping furiously at face with burning shame that blistered at his cheeks.

No, he was fine.

He was okay. Completely okay.

He knew what to do, what it was supposed to feel like.

So why?

Why wouldn't they be quiet?

Why did he feel so disgusting?

Why did this feel so...so wrong?

**'That's because you're weak. Weak and stupid. You aren't as strong as you think you are.'**

**'You're getting everything you deserve, you know.'**

**'You should be glad someone would even want to touch you. That's the best you could do.'**

*"I...just...stop...p-please...don't you think I already know that? Why can't you just shut up already?!"*, Laughing, chuckling, cackling, giggling; they whined at him, screamed at him. He knew that they were right, but it didn't help, not one bit. Why couldn't they just leave him alone? Why did they hate him? What had he done to make them say this?

Limping over to his clothes and bending down to get them, despite the protests of his body, he donned his attire with a heavy, limp hand, taking care to remain quiet though his very joints begged him to cease.

This was fine.

It wasn't a big deal.

They would quiet down.

He just had to ignore them, he just had to stop minding them, and then they would stop.

From the light of the window, however faint, he could see himself in the mirror.

And he looked fucking terrible.

Wincing at the state of his hair and the bruises upon his lips and shoulders, at least, the parts that his shirt hadn't concealed, Dash's mind began to race, the story that he would tell coming to mind in resounding cues, one after the other.

Perhaps...a dog had chased him?

Maybe someone tried to pick a fight with him?

Oh, no, what if he was...taking a jog...and he fell and hit his face?

...

Those stories wouldn't work, would they? They were poorly thought of at best, completely unbelievable at worst. Besides, the teen muddled with anxious nibbles at his nail bed, he had tried them already, hadn't he?

He couldn't keep pulling the same shit and expect them to work, not when this happened so much...

Adjusting his clothes, Michael, fixing to plaster that coy, exuberant smile upon his face, speaking in that voice, the one that wasn't his,

but Dash's, he recited with pinpoint accuracy, "Oh, this? Nah, dude. I think I just bit my lip...or somethin'. No big deal." Shaking his head, the smile fell, thoughts churning until another answer came to mind, and mechanically, his lips fell in line, speaking once more, "Oh, not much. A guy tried to pick a fight with me; can you believe that?!"

Dash looked down, casting a glowering glance to his feet that pulled and kneaded at the stained carpet beneath his feet.

"I...shouldn't sound so...excited...I think. Maybe more...annoyed, I think?" Staring into his own eyes as he looked back up, they wavered and buckled beneath his own gaze.

He couldn't stop them.

Not when the very sight of himself sickened him.

...

He could...figure out what to say later, probably.

He was tired.

Really...tired.

Working his way back to his spot, the clock was as it always was, hands moseying by and clicking at their untroubled pace just as they had before.

Settling back onto the ground where his blanket, slick with oil and dirt, beckoned him, he made no move to unfurl it as he sat back upon it.

It was almost time for school anyway.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
> Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.

# 10. Cold Stones

**Summary for the Chapter:**

> He was late again, but his father didn't mind too much, as it would seem.
> Something, however, is going on in Dash's head, and he doesn't like it much.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

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> Thank you.

It was when he cracked his open once more to the tendrils of light filtering through the clouded window above him that he immediately wanted to close them again. For split moments it was too bright, too loud (blaring music from a distant screen grating on his ears), and too irritating for him to bother sitting up, but there it was, that distant click, click sending burning aches of annoyance along his face, but he made no move to block the sound, knowing it would help very little. Even stranger, still, was the silence coming from the room, like quiet storms bearing on his joints and heart, though oddly

enough, they felt not so strange to him as it was always this way when he woke up, right?

It always seemed so quiet, so peaceful, in the presence of the garbage and spoiled food strewn against the floor, that it almost fooled him into believing that everything was okay and that this was how things ought to be. Like those times that he had stayed over Kwan's house, something that felt so long ago, which it was since he was usually busy with, well, stuff. He couldn't tell you what it was exactly that Kwan got up to in his own time; he was really private, and Dash didn't really have it in him to ask anymore. He couldn't bear the risk of annoying his friends any more than he already did.

---

It was sort of weird waking up to the sound of soft breathing above him, something that didn't happen unless it smelled like alcohol or tobacco.

For a breath of a second, Dash shot up, scarce, darting eyes scanning the room around him with a frantic slight until he felt his breath leave him as a sigh. All that answered back to him was the disgruntled groan of the child resting above his head before settling back into a lulling drone of soft snores, loosing into the still air of the early morning.

**'You're up early. Why are you awake?'**

**'Awake? Should you wake Kwan up now, too?'**

"No, I...I don't know, actually. Maybe I should wait, I think; he would be mad if I did that." Lying back upon the floor, the boy closed his eyes.

This was strange, wasn't it?

Cracking open his blue eyes, Dash leaned up and propped himself up on his arms, taking careful notes of the room more than he had before. Like the rest of Kwan's home, the room was spacious and warm, bearing gifts of warm sunlight through the gossamer curtains strung just above the windows of his room. That had to be one of his favorite parts of his room, and really the entire house, the boy pondered; it was always so bright and pretty in here, apart from the lists of valuables strewn about the walls. Picture frames and certificates of practically every kind donned the soft grey area, and below them, chests of toys, bookshelves, and even a desk with a computer, greeted him in kind.

It was pristine and surely expensive, and the boy couldn't recount how many times he'd thought of asking if he could use it, but for some reason, he never quite made the move to, the very thought of touching something so valuable and pretty almost too much for him to even consider. Imagine if he'd broken it, or scratched it, or coughed on it?!

Just the thought of what his own parents would do if they got a

computer and he messed with it...it made his stomach hurt.

He remembered the one time that had touched his Dad's bottles, the ones he always kept in his closet. Those were his favorite, but Dash couldn't quite understand the appeal; they always tasted gross to him. But it made Dad happy, so he figured that he would go get them, you know? It was just that...he was a lot shorter than, and he couldn't reach them too well on his own, but he tried anyway. "Maybe this will get him to be happy and stop hitting Mom?", he would stupidly think, and just as he'd made his way to the closet and grabbed them, maybe the chair wobbled, or his grip was loose...whatever the case, Dash couldn't stop the freezing burn of his heart as the case dropped to the ground, breaking on impact.

Six large bottles, tears of vodka seeping into the carpet, and him, stock-still, as the older man came rushing in.

It was his fault, you know? If he had just left it alone, if he could have just learned to mind his business and do something right, maybe his arm wouldn't have gotten broken.

Of course, it was a bit hard to explain how or why it looked like that when he arrived to school the next day, but they were actually pretty calm about it, despite the weird angle that it was in.

Over and over, as they set his arm into a cast, the boy couldn't help but think it, over and over again.

"It was my fault."

"It was my fault."

"It was my fault."

And it was.

So no touching, no looking, no wanting.

He didn't want to make Kwan's Mom and Dad angry, too.

He was good at that sort of thing.

Mom told him so.

Chancing another look around, he could spot and narrowly see a crack in the door of his room, leading to the quiet bustle of something downstairs, just out of earshot. Someone was moving about, the laughter of some others as the gentle wafting scent of food levied towards the room.

Food.

Just then, his stomach growled, loud and obnoxious as the scents of

bacon, eggs, and waffles swirled in the air around him.

He knew that, deep down, it would be best to stay, to remain here in the quiet of the warm light until someone came, and that's what he would have done if his body hadn't already been moving. As if moving of its own volition, his delicate bones rose from the ground with steely fervor so intense that the boy practically ran to the door, drills of persistent hunger pulling at his muscles and twisted his gut in agony.

Hungry, so very, very hungry.

Opening the door completely, the boy tiptoed out, keeping a careful watch over his shoulder to the soft breathing of Kwan, whom he'd left behind in the room, placing watchful steps over certain regions of the floor that he remembered creaked the least. On his way, he couldn't help eying the home again, the twinge of something icky and bitter tugging at his heart before forcing it back down into the depths of his person.

Fine artifacts of many kinds adorned the halls, delicate urns and paintings of, well, he didn't know really, were left hanging and leaning against the displays. Some were splatters, others nondescript marks and shapes that, whilst he didn't have the heart to ask, still wondered from time to time what they were supposed to be, really.

Kwan's mom was...interesting, to say the least.

Taking pause at one of the paintings, it was a figure (or more like what he could guess was a person) sitting on a stone, appearing to

weep in a black circle, swirls of grey and white enveloping them. Some of the shapes were like others, fellow humans crying into the void.

At times, she would come by to look at them with him, and she would ask him what they meant. He wasn't sure what to say most of the time, weird and introspective things like this, he felt, just a bit out of his realm of expertise, but he would try anyway. Usually, she would simply nod, leaving without so much as another word, and others she would smile and chuckle, asking him to elaborate about his ideas, his interpretations about the work before him. The first few times, he recalled, there wasn't much more that he could say, and he would usually say something small or inconsequential if only to end the conversation sooner, however, after a while, the idea of thinking more about the meaning of something, the way the shapes begin to blur into forms and emotions, he found that he would have less of a harder time if only to keep the conversation from lulling.

In the back of his mind, there seemed little time to ponder on this, the burning ache of hunger very clear to him, yet still, he paused and wondered.

What say he to the person that would ask of this painting's meaning? What would he say to them if they asked him what it meant, what it was trying to say?

Gazing softly at the listless, forms creatures upon the canvas, sunken, solemn eyes cast ever downward to the black chasm before them, one word shimmered in the low light of his thoughts before he went to stand and finish his trek to the kitchen: despair.

And oddly enough, for that singular second, he felt another hunger

rise in him, but in that same breath, he choked it, suffocated it.

What it begged for was something that he could never have.

Easing towards a set of stairs, glass railing set to a spiraling case before evening out to the floor below, Dash took the bar in hand and pattered softly down, catching within earshot of the two below, Kwan's parents, he presumed as they were usually the only ones awake at this point, but he paused on the staircase, taking in the small whispers and wonderings, ones that had used his name in kind.

"...and his clothes? They were a mess, weren't they? I'm honestly not sure how they were able to hold together in the state that they were in. And the smell, too...you washed them, yes?" A woman, small and lithe, swept a paintbrush across a canvas; for a far as he could see, it was another one of the weird splatter ones. Another, this time a man swept beside her and looked at the painting, too, plates in hand. Placing them onto the round table, nearest a window that he found himself fond of, the boy listened in as he responded in kind.

"I washed them, sure, but that definitely didn't help the fact that they looked like...that. It isn't as though he can fit them, either. He's wearing clothes for a much smaller child, too; the smell is still there, though, but it's slightly better." To this, the delicate clang of plates erupted in his ears, and the smell, oh the smell.

If his curiosity didn't outweigh his hunger, then he would have sprung down there just then...but he didn't. He listened and watched, tracking them with lidded blue eyes.

"Strange, right? Smoke and just dirty; you know, I sometimes worry that he's going to bring something over to Kwan one of these days." The woman set her brushes down upon her words, a worried expression upon her face.

Bring something? What was that supposed to mean? Like, something icky or bad?

Leaning down to smell himself, the boy couldn't help recoiling, acknowledging the stench that rolled from his pores, something along the lines of sweat, smoke, and alcohol.

Did he...did he always smell like this?

Sure, his house didn't really have a shower or anything like that, but he tried his best to be clean; he tried to wash up and use his mother's perfume, but sometimes that would run out, but he didn't think that it was this...bad. A rolling wave of embarrassment collapsed on him, realizing with horror that this had been the case all day, every day; school, the park, stores with his friends...

Why...why didn't anyone tell him? Why would they let him know that he didn't smell good or look good?

He didn't understand.

Weren't friends supposed to help out when someone else needed it? It was one of those things that would need to be mentioned, had to be

mentioned, right? That's what he would have done; he learned that being honest was good, so he would tell his friends if they didn't smell too nice or their hair was messy. It was what you were supposed to do...so why hadn't they done that for him?

"Maybe...maybe they didn't notice it? Or they didn't want to hurt my feelings, probably...", That made sense to him, didn't it? Of course, they wouldn't want to seem mean and stuff, so they didn't tell him so that he wouldn't feel bad. Yeah, that had to be it. Why else would they be saying this when he wasn't here? Kwan's Mom and Dad probably wanted to keep it a secret so they wouldn't make him feel embarrassed and everything, so of course they would say this when he wasn't around...

Yeah...that had to be it

.

Otherwise, it would hurt more, though he'd be lying if there wasn't a shadow of something sticky and hurtful lying under the gaudy smile he plastered onto his features as he traversed the rest of the stairs, catching their eye as he waved with jubilant energy that matched that early morning sun.

*Always smiling, always laughing.*

"Goodmorning Mr. and Mrs. Wu! Something smells really good; is it time to eat?" Turning around, the pair smiled gingerly, though Dash couldn't help but notice how they'd stiffened at the mark of his passing, appearing to scrunch up their noses as he sidled by.

Pausing and trekking back, slower this time, he walked back over to the stairs, still smiling though he could feel it waver just a bit. The two considered him for a moment before their expressions smoothed out again, widening their calm eyes.

"Ah, yes, actually. It's just about that time, but how are you feeling this morning? Okay, we hope." They were being so nice to him, he could have fooled himself into believing that they actually meant it, you know? Maybe he would have, had they not stared at him for that second too long.

"I feel fin - I mean great! I feel really good! Should I go get Kwan? I think he's still asleep." Backing up to the stairs, he had a single foot placed back onto the first stair before they called him back.

"Oh, actually...I think Mr. Kwan wanted to talk to you about something; I can go get Kwan while you two take care of that." To that, the young woman motioned past them and up the spiraling staircase, the careful patter of her footfalls fading down the hall as only the two of them, Mr. Wu and Dash himself, was left behind. It was silent for a moment before the older man made his way over to the youth, one of which had distinctly continued smiling, though the action had caused a fair bit of pain in his cheeks.

*Just keep smiling.*

"Here, let me show you something, Michael." The boy couldn't help the rush of blood that filtered in his ears at the touch of the former, stock still as the man gently coaxed the boy over to the couch, allowing him to sit down, though he noticed that he was urged to sit upon the carpet before it as the other sat upon the soft upholstery.

"No, no, no, no, no, no...please, don't. I don't want to-" He was stopped by the sight of a beautiful, jewel red, finely woven in the shape of a jacket. White sleeves swung at the motion of the older man's grip as they seemed to sway in tandem to the other's temptation to swipe the fine piece from the air. Shining buttons and vibrant sleeves coaxed his attention from the burning ache of his head to the subtle touch of felt fabric beneath his fingertips, and for a hair's breadth of a second, he was able to breathe, smiling faintly amongst his rushing heart.

This wasn't what he'd been expecting at all.

"Now, I *know* that it's a little big, but Ai and I had been talking about getting you something for your birthday. It was one the fourth, wasn't it?" The boy nearly didn't register the question, but a glimpse at the patient, but expectant, gaze of the older man whipped his attention back, and he nodded silently in kind.

"Y-yes, sir. It was on the fourth...", Placing his hands back into his lap, he waited until a smile broke out from ear-to-ear from the other man to look up, tempting a shifting glance back to the jacket as it was pressed against the other's chest.

"Well, we know that this is a bit late, with it being nearly two weeks since then, but we wanted to give you something, and we think we found just the thing." Urging the article closer, Dash almost couldn't

fathom touching it again, fearing that he would misinterpret what he had meant.

He...he didn't mean...

"We thought that you might like this. I've seen you looking at it many times before, and though this is from my own days as a student, however many years that was," Finishing with a chuckle, he continued,"...I think perhaps it's time to give it to someone that needs it more than I." With a slight nudge, the older man placed it within his hands, standing with a firm nod to his wife as he went to greet the half-asleep Kwan who had nearly stumbled down the steps in jest. Though, Dash didn't mind that, staring with confounding shock at the clothing in his grasp.

Surely this was a mistake, a joke, a prank.

Right?

Opening and closing, flipping and folding, the boy looked in every nook and cranny just to spot anything; a fold that held a slip, a tear, a nick. Something that would make this make sense.

Something that would tell him that his fears were valid and that no one would ever bother giving him anything...ever.

He didn't deserve it. He wasn't owed this.

He definitely didn't earn it.

"So why?", He wanted to ask that laughing man that said those things before.

Why in the world would anyone ever want to give someone as dirty and filthy as him something so beautiful and clean? Something so amazing and awesome that the boy almost felt wrong and disgusted simply looking at too long, let alone *touching* it.

He wasn't supposed to.

This wasn't right.

"M-Mr. Kwan? I don't...I don't understand...I can't - I don't -," Picking up the jacket, the boy set it back on the couch, wavering blue eyes glued to the carpet, wringing his hands upon his worn shirt. For a moment, the man regarded him with a silent gaze before loosing a small but kind smile from his lips.

"You don't have to, but I know that it is something that you really want, so accept the gift. It's alright to have things from time to time. Never feel guilty for something like that. Now," Easing up to the table, the man took his seat and pulled out the chair to offer it to the boy.

"...I imagine that you'd like to eat now, right?" The three of them smiled at him, softly beckoning for him, and despite the roaring calls

of the voices,

**'They're lying to you!'**

**'Stupid, can't you see that this is all an act? They can't stand you.'**

...he couldn't bear to keep them waiting, but he left the jacket upon the chair.

He would want to be clean first before he put it on.

---

Those moments seemed so far...away. Like gilded dreams, imagined by a deluded child lead through their wishes of something more, but how could that be? How could he want for more when he was already so...happy?

Right?

Taking one hand that he struggled to steady, the boy reached up and stroked one arm of the jacket, playing with the stringy fleece before releasing a thread.

It had been so long since he'd last seen them, Kwan's parents. They were so kind, so...amazing. It was hard to believe it at first, that his parents were so different from his own, and that baffled him, scared him; to this, it was a mystery that he still hadn't quite cracked.

Why did they hug him and kiss him? Why wasn't his skin red and purple, or they didn't yell at him as his parents did for him? The boy once, a long time ago, had enough will to ask that of his mother, when his father had kindly taken the evening to drink with friends, leaving them alone. There was an odd sort of quiet that had settled over the home as the words left his mouth, but in the same breath, he could feel it, that burning look that seared into his skin and made him squirm. She was staring at him, hazy blue eyes suddenly crystalline and clear as she, despite her hunched stature, still towered over the boy.

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"What did you just say to me, Michael?" Her tone was quiet, but there was something there, something cold as she scratched at her cheek irritably, freckled cuts lining her face as fingernails rubbed against old nicks on the once pearly surface. The boy backed away a bit, but not before her hand, knarled and crooked, grasped his arm, pulling him back with an oddly firm grip that made moving impossible for him.

"I-I just...Kwan's Mom and Dad are different from you but I don't understand why. T-they're...they're nice to me, but I don't feel that here. Did I do something for you to be angry at me?" Her grip tightened, and the child, sensing the growing tension, rushed to abate her.

"W-wait, I'm sorry, sorry; I didn't mean that! I just...I don't understand why they're so nice to Kwan, and why you guys don't-," Dash couldn't finish before a hot rush collected on his cheek, and another, and another.

"With *everything* that we do for you, you have the n-nerve to talk to me like that?!" Another burning touch and the shame pull of tears down his stinging cheeks; the boy didn't have the heart to look at her.

"M-mom...I didn't mean,-"

"No, you meant exactly...exactly what you said. You don't appreciate anything that we do, do you? You just think that the world is supposed to revolve around you and why is that? You think you deserve to the center of everything, huh? You think you're owed shit?" Pushing him to the ground, she stood over him.

"N-no, no, I-,"

"What do you want us to do, Michael? Why can't you just be happy that we even put up with you?" To this, she kneeled down, cupping her face in her hands.

"I didn't...I didn't even want to have you, you know that? I gave up everything for you, everything...everything that I *could* have had and this is how you treat me?" A small sob escaped her lips, small shudders rocking her body as she sat there before him, knotted red hair framing her face and blanketing around her shoulders like an old drape. The boy didn't move, didn't speak, the sickness of guilt set over him.

Had he been selfish? He didn't...he didn't mean to make her, to make them, feel that way. That wasn't what he'd wanted, not at all; he never wanted to hurt them and make them feel as though he didn't appreciate them or that they didn't do anything for him because that wasn't true.

They'd given him food, given him water sometimes; heck, they even let him wash up at the sink sometimes and sleep on the floor! It was better than sleeping outside in his opinion.

Maybe he just had to tell her so.

"N-no, Mama. I...I do appreciate you and Papa, I didn't mean to...I never wanted you to feel this way. Never. I...I'm sorry..." She didn't look up.

What could he say? What could he do?

This was all his fault, completely his fault.

"You don't mean that. You don't...you don't mean that at all. You're a liar and all you ever do is sit around here and take, take, take. That's all that you ever fucking do is take from everyone and you don't give shit in return." She looks up, taking no time to acknowledge the boy before she stands up, and storms off in the other direction, and the boy watched her with wide, terrified eyes.

No. No, she was angry. Really angry.

He did this, he caused this. He didn't want her to be mad at him; no, he couldn't take it.

Taking off after her, he used his only steady hand to grab at the helm of her dress, looking up at her (though he was quickly reaching her height. The woman didn't look back, even feigning pulling away from him as the child desperately tethered himself to her.

"Mom, please, please! I'm sorry, I really am? I am selfish and awful and I didn't mean to make you angry. Please, I don't want you to be mad at me, so please, I want to give you something. I'll do anything just...just...," Dash couldn't give pause to the lazy tears that barreled down his cheeks in droves, shaking at the silence giving space to the air between them, but at the sight of the woman gazing at him, a warm smile coaxed along with her features, the boy couldn't help but smile, too. Taking him into her arms, Mira leaned down close to his ear to speak.

"You'd do...anything? Anything at all? Just to make me happy? Is that what you mean?" Furiously, the boy nods, and to this, she smiles even wider, taking his hand and leading him to the room that she and

his father shared.

Sitting upon the bed, the woman guided her son to the ground before opening her legs and hitching up the dress, pulling his head down to the damp print of her underwear, and above him, her words resounded.

"Anything for us, right? Is that what you said?" She didn't stop looking into those wide, blue eyes, even when he nodded quietly. Even when she could feel him shaking through her hand on his head.

Cute.

***---- (Warning for explicit underage Incest/rape and sexual content; please skip if needed or desired) ----***

"Then I want you to do something for me, but you have to listen, okay?" The boy nods again.

"You're going to make me feel good, really, really good. Can you do that?" She didn't wait for a response before continuing.

"I want you to lick down there, okay? I want you to do it softly, and

Mommy would love you so much if you did, did you k-know that?" Dash didn't understand. She wanted him to touch her special place with his...mouth? That didn't feel right, not at all, though he wouldn't get the chance to ask, that familiar look of agitation enough to stifle the very thought of a question upon his tongue.

"Good. Very good. Now, I want you to take off my underwear...yeah, that's it." The child guided the worn panties from her bottom down her legs, silently minding the odd dampness of the garments in his grasp before dropping them at his side, gazing headlong into the chasm of his mothers bottom, all along trying his best to stifle the odd nausea that had settled in his gut.

Dash, in the back of his mind, couldn't help the odd taste that filled his mouth with each drawing lick he took, swirling his tongue about the organ in tandem with his mother's whimpering cries, the woman squirming and pressing his head into her warmth. Sticky warmth that clung to his lips and made him want to gag at the stench.

"*Hnnn*, Da~ash. *Dash*!" She pushed him further down, and he could feel her clench around him.

"This is good? Am I doing it right?" The boy hummed into it, and she cried out, moaning as she reached her peak.

"P-please, faster. *Unnn*, **hah-hah**...!," Mira paused as it tapered off into her orgasm, clenching her thighs against his head so intensely that a headache developed on the eve of her release, the strain on his neck so great that the boy felt lightheaded, though this came to pass as she let him go, coming down from her high.

The taste was foul, bitter, bearing like lemons and fish on his tongue that forced his mouth dry.

"M-Mom...Mama?" He didn't dare wipe his mouth, chancing a look to the debased woman in the middle of her high, and he could tell that she couldn't hear him, but she drew him near, pressing him against her bosom in a gesture of tired affection, and had he known better, he would have pulled away at the feeling of her easing down into his pants, grasping at his flaccid member, stroking it as the boy recoiled for a moment before stiffening at the sensation of his flesh coming to in her palm. That same motion led her other hand, reaching as far as she could go, to push down on the helm of his pants, pushing them down far enough that his bottom had been completely uncovered.

"Wait...wait, Mama-," Leaning up, propping herself on his arm, she smiled at him, stroked his cheek with a gentle hand that gave pause to any words that had formed in his mind.

"Now, now; you did say that you would give me whatever I wanted...whatever I needed, right? You wouldn't lie to me, would you? You wouldn't tell me that if you didn't intend to do it, would you?" All the while, she continued to stroke him, pressing her body into his hardened length.

The boy couldn't move, couldn't speak.

No, he wasn't a liar. He promised he wasn't!

He wanted to give something back to his mother, the one who loved him...cared for him. This was what he was supposed to do, he knew

in his heart, as he whimpered at the touch of her hand prodding his tip, and he nodded desperately, wanting very much for her to finish it, the touch, the feelings, completely and utterly unbearable.

"N-no...no, Mama. I'll...I-I'll do what you want. I'm sorry, I just-," A clench around his member caught the words in his throat.

*Please, it hurts.*

"Then shut the hell up and do it already. You know what I want, don't you?" Mira moaned as he pulled his member inside of her, appearing to fold at the sensation of filling despite the distinct hiss of pain coming from the boy.

He hated this when she did this, what it felt like...but should he? Should it hurt and smell bad when he did this for her?

Even now, as she directed him into the slow thrusts that she loved so much, grasping his small shoulders as he picked up the pace of the formless, stiff movements she'd told him to do.

She needed him, wanted him, so for what reason did he cry? Why did his face burn with embarrassment and fear at the mounting pressure between his thighs? Mama told him it was supposed to feel good, that this was what people did to show each love, but it didn't...feel that way. Not at all, and the ache that collected down below reached its

peak as a thin tendril of white trailed from his tip and the loose hole that he'd pulled himself out of. It puckered sadly as the last of his seed dribbled down and onto the worn, dirty sheets, and the woman sat up, pulling the boy close in his vacant state, placing delicate kisses on his head and lips before pulling him into her lap. A single hand stroked his limp member, but the boy didn't dare move, screwing his eyes shut but smiling all the same.

***---- (End of the explicit scene; please proceed with caution) ----***

"Didn't you love that, too? I love you so much, Michael."

*Don't call me that. Never, ever, call me that.*

"I...I-I love you too, Mama. Did I make you happy? Did it f-feel good?" His little heart leaped for joy at the returned gesture of her smile, yellowed and empty as it was.

"Happy? I couldn't be happier than I already am. Maybe you aren't so bad after all, but you shouldn't be so selfish. Don't let that be a habit, okay?" Pulling him into her chest, the woman sighed as though she had to bear a heavyweight.

"You have to be willing to give. Of course, you think that Kwan's parents are nice to you, but they don't know you as we do. If they could see how selfish," A stroking hand against his hair tightened along with the muddied locks, and Dash whimpered, but he resisted the urge to pull at the fist.

"..., awful, and irritating you were, they'd treat you the same way that we do. It's just that you, you know, deserve it. This is the least that you could do, sweetie." Was that...true?

If they could see him more, be around him more...would he have to do this for them, too? It shouldn't have surprised him, the child thought through the waves of hot agony that oscillated through his skull; it was a miracle that they could even stand being around him, let alone not punish him for, well, the bad stuff he would surely do. He was sure, in his addled mind, that he would do so at some point, and he would gladly make it up to them; a hundred times over if he had to.

As much as he had to feel like this, to be held like this.

Anything at all if it meant he felt...loved...maybe.

---

It took every amount of effort for him to turn over, mulling over the

titillating hands of the clock just as it was so many times before, reading the time in blurred shpes that made his heart patter unevenly in his chest. Of course, watching the hands read back to him the time, it wasn't his tardiness that bothered him.

No, not in the slightest.

It was only the second day, and he was sure his teachers knew that he was a fuck-up.

Nothing new there.

Pushing up from the paneled wall with a shaky hand, he froze at the dull, throbbing ache that radiated from his backside, his face contorting into a silent scream for a breathless moment. Leaning back upon the wood behind him, Dash released the breath that he had unwittingly held, trembling at the great strain the action had put on his lungs as one after another, taut huffs soared past his dry lips, rattling his ribs as he tried his best to collect himself.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck! I can't go to school like this! What am I supposed to do? I didn't think it would hurt this badly." Though he mused, looking at his little nook on the ground, he supposed sleeping the way he had would have helped either, cursing his own stupidity at having placed so much pressure on a spot that he knew would hurt later.

His fault, again and again, like always.

Biting back tears at the wretched sting of his, well, nether regions, the teen distantly wondered whether he could hope to at least stand, but by the protest of his body at his second attempt, Dash figured that wouldn't be the case.

Chancing yet another glance to the time, he gaped at the minutes that had passed, ten in what seemed like just a moment between his resting after his first attempt.

He was wasting time, precious seconds under the scrutiny of his own idiocy.

He was late, tardy, all manners of wrong for having overslept in the first place.

For not being stronger, smarter, better.

Why couldn't he be better?

Why?

Why?

Why?

*Why couldn't he just di-*

It was too quiet.

Turning slowly on his side, the boy eyed the door, ajar as far as he could see, across from the kitchenette that led to his parent's keep, almost chuckling at the odd similarity between the days he could observe.

It was always the same, it seemed.

There was nothing out of the ordinary, the usual haze of cigarette smoke and stench of cooked heroin and alcohol blazed his sensation like a lit match in the dark, and the latent snores that made the creaky trailer sing with them in kind, shrouded in the gentle quiet of the mornings he would awake before them. Except...when the rooms would become just a little bit dark, the air just a bit murkier, remembering vividly that just as it had been still in this morning light, there followed behind them this dark shroud that hung before them in their waking hours. Be it the anger that shot from them to him, or the violent anger they held for one another, he knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that one of them was listening, and that thought alone was enough to make him want to curl into his blanket, away from the scary eyes that crushed him.

That would be easy, wouldn't it?

Hell, he doubted either of them cared one way or another what happened with his education, even if they tried to convince themselves that they did. If anything, the boy thought with resignation, wouldn't it be nice if he could just forget about all of that? It was so much easier to just be here and make them happy; they liked to do things with him, and maybe if he made them happy...maybe...maybe they wouldn't hate him as much.

Just a thought.

**'You'd love for them to fuck you up some more, wouldn't you? You masochistic piece of shit.'**

"I don't...I don't even understand what a masochist is? I don't think I am, though." A sudden thought struck him...

**'You're just trying to make excuses for you to be lazy. Of course, you'd love to stay home.'**

"I'm not! I swear! Why do you always say that when that wasn't what I'd meant?!" Since when did he actually speak back to them? Was this something people did?

**'Why would you want to stay home? Why would you do that?'**

"I...I just can't move as well right now; my body hurts so badly. I don't...I don't know what to do." Was he a freak for responding to them? It wasn't like they ever talked back to him, at least, he didn't think so. But they wouldn't stop talking.

Yelling.

Screaming.

Crying.

He just wanted them out.

He wanted them out right now.

Why wouldn't they be quiet?

Be quiet, be quiet, be quiet, be quiet, be quiet, be quiet-

Dash could feel the beginnings of a headache as he felt dribbles of warm dribble down his face, bringing his hands down his face only to notice that his fingernails dripped with red, and his scalp stung with fresh wounds.

Hmmm. Never did that before.

Anyway, it would be so easy to just roll over and sleep, sleep, sleep, no matter what the voices said to the contrary.

Sleep until nothing else in the world remained but for him and the silent morning that he was alone.

Never to move, to breathe, and that's precisely why he pulled himself from the ground.

Throbbing, shaking, but moving, all the same, peeling himself from the floor with a single heave, sucking in a taut breath when the ceaseless hum of pain ran through him. It was with him on his knees, using the windowsill just above his to pull himself up, that the floor cried before him, that shrill, incessant crying shocking him into stillness, not daring to bring the burning eyes he surely felt into existence.

He knew that he was there, watching him.

Laughing, standing there with a crooked grin upon his face distorted his features.

He always laughed, and so did everyone else.

Everyone was laughing.

And he was the joke.

**'Say something, say something.'**

**'He can see you! You definitely woke him up, heh heh.'**

**'Do you think he was awake all along? Maybe it'll be best to just keep your mouth shut; maybe he won't hit you as hard.'**

Before he could stop himself, the words tumbled forward, automated even as his working heart thrummed within the confines of his chest.

"G-good morning, Sir. I'm so sorry for this, the...the noise. I overslept and I couldn't get up so I-,"

Tick-tock, the chime of the clock on the wall reminded him of where he ought to be, but his arms, his legs...they refused to move, waiting

on bated breath as no sound rose from before him. Just the creaking of boards and the intensifying scent of cigarette smoke and liquor choking his senses as rough hands pulled him to a stand, snaking around his waist as they turned him around and pressed into his backside, and for a moment, just a moment, Dash almost screamed, nearly attempting squirm out of their hold if he hadn't known just how bad that would have turned out for him. The throbbing only seemed to worsen as the other's weight pushed along the afflicted area, peaking at an unbearable throb so intense that Dash thought he would faint, but as fate and that cruel God would have it, his body refused to give in.

Yet there it was again, that fuzziness that claimed his mind as a familiar presence at times like these. It choked out the sensations, the touches, even when he could, like whispers in a dark wood, hearing words passing on the foul tongue to his ears, yet he couldn't make sense of them.

It was him, looking out, not in.

Silent as the pounding rush of blood in his ears forced the sound away, damning it to non-reality.

He hadn't noticed that they'd worked their way back into the humid hell of the last room, him pinned below that formless shadow.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, the thought of detention, the scowling face of his teacher as they lectured him on and on about responsibility and the importance of education was an annoying but welcome thought.

He'd been told worse.

"I love you." Said someone, something, above him, biting it softly as a hand snaked between his legs.

And for a moment there, he almost believed it.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
> Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.

# 11. Happy

**Summary for the Chapter:**

> Moment alone can often offer a bit of insight into the self.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

> This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.
>
> To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)
>
> Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.
>
> Thank you.

He was tired.

Too tired to mind the angered expression of the small lady sitting across from him. Dash could tell that she was annoyed, what, with him having adjusted himself  in the chair for what seemed like thee fifth time in the last minute or so, but that nagging ache that whined upon his backside was enough for him to take that scowling squint that he'd known so well, and return it with an smile, if only to distract himself from...it. From the staring, the itching that made him

want to retreat into the corner, to curl in on himself and disappear.

Anything to make her stop looking at him, to melt away from her anger for how could she be angry at...nothing?

How could she be angry if he weren't there anymore?

Of course, if it were that easy, his mind posed forlornly, then he wouldn't be here at all.

Somewhere, in the back of his mind, he pondered that possibility, but just as quickly discarded it.

Now wasn't the time.

A disjointed cough ahead of him, through callous ears, called his attention, snapping his eyes back to the desk, but strangely enough, not to her gaze, scanning the intricate wood engravings of the furniture. Dash could still feel them, those eyes, knowing that she expected him to return the gesture, a tentative tapping of her finger on something he figured as meant to capture his attention.

**'What are you waiting for?'**

**'Look at her, look her!'**

**'You should keep ignoring her, see what happens...'**

Carefully, slowly he breathed, stretching his features into a wide of a smile as he could muster, straightening his back and lifting his face where a grimace once stood. He had to be sure to ignore the twinge of irritation that he felt with himself at the notion of turning away, of frowning.

How or why would do that when he felt that he should be happy? How could he when a haughty grin cracked along his face?

"Oh, sorry. Did ya need somethin', Ishi? Hope I didn't do anything to get in trouble, and on such a beautiful day, too!" His voice was loud, and he was a liar.

It was cold, wet, and grim outside, the distant voice of thunder almost comedic in its timing, despite him hoping that it had since stopped this morning. It would make getting home a lot...wetter, he guessed, smiling sheepishly at the pressing look the woman was giving him. The boy found himself with that jittery shake that wormed through him when people did that when they looked at him for too long. From across a pristine wooden desk, the tired, dark eyes watched him, stared at him, tapping away that finger on dark mahogany until it abruptly stopped.

Of course, Dash came to attention at this, but he'd be lying if he said

that he could focus everything that he had on her and only her; thoughts and whispers playing like silent curses in his head made that a bit...difficult.

"Mr. Baxter, I was hoping that you wouldn't be in trouble, but that may not be the case if you keep up this behavior going forward. I fear that you may not be taking seriously just how profoundly your tardiness and lack of effort your grades." There was a breath, a moment of ponderance in the still air as she watched him.

*Stop staring at me.*

**'She has a point.'**

**'See, you aren't trying hard enough, you idiot.'**

**'Try harder, huh?'**

"Try harder?" Dash could feel his smile waver, dissenting into a small frown as he averted his gaze, that veil of energy that he'd put on falling away for a breadth of a second and a wave of tiredness following suit.

It was true, wasn't it? Taking his mind as far as he could take it, he could remember getting a tardy slip just yesterday, the odd stares of his classmates, even his friends, as he all but stumbled to his seat, the seed of awkwardness burrowed deep as the lesson began to pick up speed again.

This wasn't anything new.

He should be used to it, being made into an example by others where being late and not doing your work would get you, he would give her that.

But he was doing his best.

He'd been trying, and failing, for years now to grasp what they were telling him, to understand the lessons, to turn in his meager work. It was in bitter memory that he recalled sitting there in the library, hours upon hours passing as his student tutor remained painfully absent, leaving him and his scrawled notes there as a spectacle that the other students, much smarter and clever than he, to gawk at. He couldn't recall how many days that he'd stayed after school to try to get help; usually he would settle for simply going home. but he guess that somewhere, deep in him, there was something that wanted to learn, to understand.

Though, after a while, it was bit much to ask of him to keep being the object of their amusement.

He could hear them, rumors and whispers about how stupid he looked, how he honestly thought that anyone would want to be

caught next to him, helping him? It must have been a common train of thought as his seat was always left empty as the clock hands lumbered by.

He'd chosen to leave, and he didn't look back, though his grades suffered for it, neglected enough where he'd already failed several, if not every, class he had.

Of course, he couldn't let them see that he was as embarrassed, angry, and disappointed as he felt.

How silly would that look, he wondered?

It had been his own fault after all.

It had been foolish of him to even think that he could get help from the very people that he's shoved into lockers, or pushed around and teased; Dash figured it was their little way of getting back at him, of settling the score.

He couldn't blame them.

The teen could imagine that it was pretty liberating to know that you could help someone, but not doing it, be it from spite or otherwise.

"Not trying? Psh, I was, I mean, I am! I totally am." To be honest, he wasn't sure who he was trying to convince, her or himself. Not that it mattered, as she didn't seemed convinced, or maybe, he didn't say

anything at all?

It was hard to tell. Everything felt sort of...fuzzy.

It was always a bit hard to tell.

Seeing her raise a thin, sharp brow, he could tell that she was tired of him, that he patience was waning.

Though...who could blame her?

He was annoying and...and stupid.

Stupid.

Stupid.

Stupid.

His intuition could tell him everything that he thought that he already knew, watching as she seemed to ease her expression with a tired sigh before leaning back in her chair, opening the adjacent drawer, and pulling out a slip of paper. Silent as she scrawled down something along its lines, Dash couldn't help but readjust himself in the chair, noting with quiet annoyance the burning ache of his

backside.

"Mr. Baxter, I really want you to make out this year with good grades. This world...this world is different; you just can't account for sports and good looks to get you the things that you want. You have to want to do well, you need to try much harder than you have, and I will be calling your parents to arrange ways of doing so."

A breath passed, then another before Dash felt himself exhale a shaky breath, suddenly at attention that he hadn't been before.

Handing him the slip (or more like sliding it across the desk), the woman didn't think twice when the teen made no move to take it, a sickening pale flush drenching his features as his thoughts raced.

"Call my...parents? You...what do you...?" His hand seemed to drift on it's on toward his sleeves, scratching, scratching at the fabric.

No.

No, no, no.

She can't do that.

He couldn't...he couldn't let her do that.

Daddy would be mad.

Mommy would be mad.

He didn't like it when they got mad.

*Oh, God, I'm so scared. Please help me-*

Absently, he took the slip from the desk, bristling toward the ground as his heart went 'Thrum, Thrum', constantly beating in his chest, though he could vaguely register muffled words upon his ears, but they didn't make sense.

None of it seemed to make sense, not when the blood in his ears pounded, pounded away like insects on the brain.

What was happening?

He needed to...he needed to breathe.

It's...so warm...

Too...warm...

Burning...c-can't breathe...

It was through a gentle touch that the boy felt his skin melt, pulsing like hot plasma through his veins as a shuddering breath blistered past his lips.

She was talking, yelling, muttering; so many sounds, yet despite that, he could focus on nothing but the sticky sensation of her hand on him.

Their hands.

Touching...touching him.

Pulling him...

Hitting him-

*Please...I'll be good. It hurts so badly-*

"Michael?! What is going on with you?!" Really, it was too fuzzy to discern, but he could have sworn that she looked almost...worried?

No. N-no, no...

There's no way that anyone could be worried about him. She was probably just annoyed or angry.

Yeah, that made more sense, didn't it?

Why else would she have touched him. if not to punish him?

That's the only thing that made sense...but why didn't she do it, then?

"I...I-I...what?...," Taking his jacket sleeve, Dash wiped at his mouth, feeling the gleaming warmth of saliva dribbling down his lips, and equally so were the hot tears that slid down his cheeks, as clear as his eyes were blue.

Yet no more clearer than the budding torrents of embarrassment that flooded him in the moment, there, on the ground, his pants soaked with urine.

What?

What...what just happened?

"Michael , are you alright? It looks as though you've-," Breaking that quiet word was a slur of boisterous laughter, loud and resonant even in the sickly air of the office, drenched with the stench of waste and hanging breath of tension. Leaning back on his hands, the teen almost appeared to shift entirely, donning that familiar, empty smile, lessening his cackle to a soft chuckle, avoiding her gaze all the same.

"Ah, well, do you think I could get to class? I'd hate to miss any more than I have already, you know?" Loosing another chuckle, the teen didn't wait to hear what she had to say, taking in hand in stringy backpack before trekking the length of the room.

He could still hear her calling his name as he left the space, but the sticky feeling of disgust kept his smile, that empty smile, plastered on his features.

----(Time-skip)----

Padding down quiet hallways gave him access to the murmur of classes strewn on both sides as he passed the successive rooms, though more than that, he couldn't help the tickling itch between his legs as the stench of urine reminded him of his...

"Ugh, fuck me! What is wrong with me?! I can't go to class like this; that would just make things worse. Well, worse than they already are...," Stopping for a moment, Dash circled around in the hall for a minute before pacing into a bathroom a bit further down the way.

It would be, at the very least, harder to convince others that he hadn't pissed himself if he smelled like this.

He was already late, so it wasn't as if ten minutes more would make a difference.

*It doesn't matter, nothing matters-*

Alone, the teen set his bag upon the floor before making his way to one of four sinks. Taking a paper towel, wet from a few moments under the faucet, Dash scrubbed for a minute or two, going through several of the towels as each soaked through until he felt that the smell was, at the very least, manageable.

As manageable as he could make it, at least.

Tossing the last of his towels away, Dash stopped for a moment to look in the mirror, unsure of what his face looked like. The last thing he needed was for people to start asking why he looked like he was crying.

Which he wasn't.

That never happened.

He wasn't crying.

He never cries.

...

Casting a reluctant look upwards, the teen couldn't help but flinch at the state of his features.

He looked fucking terrible.

When had his eyes become so red, his face flushed and parlor?

His hair, sticking in oily strands every which way?

Dark bags hanging like curtains around his eyes?

Was this really what he looked like? How frequently did he come to school like this? Looking like this?

**'Yeah, you look fuckin' terrible.'**

**'Man, you've really let yourself go, huh? Not that you ever looked good in the first place.'**

Yeah, that was true wasn't it?

He was...ugly.

Disgusting.

Nasty.

Too gross to be liked.

*Scratch*

Too rancid to be loved.

*Scratch*

Not good enough...

Not Good Enough...

NOT GOOD ENOUGH-

His hand was...wet. Sticky with something and warm as the gunk of a coppery scent dripped lazily from beneath his fingernails, the stench of that substance so pungent that it drew his gaze away from his face and to the drenched sleeve of his jacket.

Even stranger was the still frantic itching didn't cease, even when that hand, desperate in its movements, pushed up his arm, moving with his jacket sleeve. Further and further as the murmurs between his ears went on and on...

Talking, talking, talking.

Won't stop talking.

Rushing into one of the empty bathroom stalls, he slammed the door behind him, locking it and throwing himself upon the toilet seat. Yanking his sleeve up, sucking in a taut breath as the itchy fabric slid like bristles along his exposed flesh.

--(If sensitive to mentions and situations of self-harm, both implicit and explicit, please skip this portion of the text)----

'Hnnn, hnnn...'

*It hurts..it hurts so much.*

Each scrape, each claw that dragged against his raw skin screamed for him to stop, begged for him to cease if only to give pause to it all. The folding cuts, rivelets of raw flesh, dripped warm, red liquid that seeped into his jeans and dyed his hands and fingernails.

He knew that this...this was wrong. From all those years ago, from the very first time, this was bad.

Disgusting.

Like everything else.

*Scratch*

Like everything else that involved him, he couldn't help but be weak.

*It hurts..so why does it feel so...good?*

Yet even now, as hot tears crawled like claws down his face, he smiled, chuckling as he dug deeper, longer, never stopping, not stopping.

***'Scratch harder.'***

***'God, this feels so good, doesn't it?***

*'Oh, you're bleeding so much!'*

Sucking in another breath, Dash couldn't help the furious blush appearing to spread from one ear to the other as he swiped with listless desperation at his worn limbs, bearing upon the seat beneath with each movement.

It...i-it hurt, but he couldn't stop.

More and more, the water from his eyes drifted lazily down his cheeks, wetting the unkempt hair at his ears as his head lolled and rolled back against the wall of the stall, his hand moving without a word. It knew better than him that he needed this, wanted this; it didn't stop, even when his fingers pawed at his cuts, individual digits slinking between the slits. Even as he stifled the moan (just barely) that trembled on his lips, or the whimper in his throat that screamed to be freed, did he release it, chuckling as it died out.

He could feel it, the tightening of his pants as he spied a small bulge that teased the seam of his pants.

No.

No, he shouldn't be here.

For a moment, in his addled mind, the teen pulled his hand away.

He should be...he should be in class.

With K-Kwan, and Star, and-

**'Friends? They can't stand you! Can't you see that? You're right where you're supposed to be.'**

"N-no...no, that isn't true-,"

**'Yes it is. What good would being in class do anyway? It isn't as if you could do the work, even if you wanted to.**

**'Ugh, you're hard? God, you sick fuck-'**

**'Yeah, just stay here! You should enjoy yourself, shouldn't you?'**

He...he could, couldn't he? Reservations of his own died on his tongue, heaving a heavy sigh as he felt pants grow tighter.

*"I should go back...,"* His mind uttered as his fingers pawed at the button his pants.

*"This is...this is b-bad...,"* His thoughts reminded him as he pulled down his briefs. He didn't mind the speckles of red that sprayed his legs as he stroked his swollen length.

The burning for his wounds as they stretched and pulled from the speed of his hand.

The way his mind lulled, lightheaded, from the stench of blood.

Nope, he didn't mind.

Not. One. Bit.

*"Hnnn, hnnn...,"* The voices were screaming, cheering, so...happy, and he was happy...too.

So happy.

Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy. Happy.

So...happy.

Then his world went dark.

## 12. Journal Entry #03 - June 8th, 2004

**Summary for the Chapter:**

Thoughts on love.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

Note (At the beginning):

This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.

To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)

Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.

Thank you.

*June 8th, 2004*

*Something is wrong with me.*

*I don't know.*

*Maybe it's just me, but I don't think other people are like this.*

*I mean, like they don't like the things that I do.*

*They don't like to be hit.*

*They don't like to be yelled at.*

*Isn't that how you are supposed to show that you like someone?*

*How else would you do that?*

*I like him a lot, so how come he won't look my way?*

*Why does he frown when I come by?*

*No matter how hard I hit him, spit on him, shove him into things, he won't look my way.*

*I just want him to look at me.*

*Just me.*

*Only me.*

*If that bitch Sam wasn't there, then he could see me.*

*Maybe if I just hit him harder.*

*Maybe if I kick him, bite him, squeeze him.*

*He'd notice me.*

*He'd love me.*

*Just me.*

*Me.*

*Me.*

*Me.*

**Notes for the Chapter:**

Note (At the end):

This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.

# 13. Red

**Summary for the Chapter:**

He was awake again, again, again.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

Note (At the beginning):

This story is NOT a happy one, and this may, or may not, end happily.

To this end, Dash (whom I have donned the name "Michael", with Dash being his given nickname) will be subject to many very violent, abusive, and unpleasant situations. Because of this, I am placing this disclaimer here as a warning for what lies ahead to any that do not wish to read this. Any that remain, please take heed that this is my first story, and as such, you are more than welcome to add any input that you feel is necessary (critique in the comments, notes, etc.)

Below, the story starts, and again, I placed this here so that any that may be sensitive to the materials founded in the text and given ample time to leave.

Thank you.

He was greeted by the stench of blood, and immediately, he knew it was his own.

Yet, the twinge of worry that he felt squeeze his heart as he scrambled to pull out his phone wasn't enough to pull his sluggish limbs with any semblance of urgency, energy thoroughly spent. The time didn't help, watching the dull glow of his phone read to him the fair time of noon before the boy could begin to sit up, prying his body from the seat before stumbling into the bathroom door, his

knees jarred and weak.

It was only by the cool breeze that he noticed his pants were still down, briefs as well, his soft member placid against his thigh, slick with red., though long dried.

Oh, right.

Remarking his own hands, fingernails appearing to be dipped in paint, dried streaks of white laid bare on his palm, Dash didn't move to open the door, flickers of memory playing like a tape behind his eyes.

It placed latent shivers down his spine as he remembered, and the desire still resonated, if only a bit.

Wait, no.

He should be...be disgusted.

Repulsed, right?

Looking down at himself, he couldn't really say that he was surprised to see the beginning of an erection, or the brush pleasure as his tip pressed against the door of the bathroom stall.

*Press harder, harder, hnnn-*

"N-no. I...I need to go to lunch. L-lunch with-," Doubling over, it was only a moment's time before loosing the contents of his stomach, however meager, upon the tiled floor. Yellow bile, bubbling, burning, stung his tongue and throat, thoughts swimming without focus and direction.

**'You okay there?**

**'Falling...you're sick.'**

Sick?

Drips of blood, sprung from open wounds upon his arms, screamed at him, cursed him as each movement ripped and tore at the new scabs. Loosing a visceral cry, the boy cradled them close only to recoil from his own touch as they brushed the rough fabric of his jacket.

He'd have to cover them up.

There's no way that he'd be able to get to class, or lunch, like this.

Not like this.

Another rush of dizziness blurred his vision, realizing with a jolt that he must've lost more blood than he thought he had, much of it on his pants, shirt, and jacket, though thankfully, one could easily mistake those for less...gruesome additions to his articles. Nothing more than stains of age and not the coppery substance that coated his arms.

The others...he could really excuse.

Surely saying that it was just strawberry jam wouldn't cut it.

Definitely not.

Though, the boy reminded himself with a lagging drone, there was somewhere that he could go.

The nurse's office.

'**No! That's stupid!**'

**'You're going to get caught, you fucking idiot!'**

**'You can take care of yourself!'**

**'Don't go.'**

"What other choice do I have? What am I supposed to do about this? I need clothes and...and something to cover this up. What am I supposed to do?" Slowly, he pulled up his briefs, trying his hardest to ignore the engorged flesh between his legs, and his pants soon after, fastening the button before, with shaky hands, grasping the lock on the door.

He paused.

There was no one around, for as far as he could tell, just the silent eerie of the dim lights above his head, the drip-drop of the faucets beyond his view, and the gurgle of toilets on both sides of him.

No one that would see him.

No one that would notice as he stumbled from the stall, bumping in the sink before him and looking up into the mirror.

Staring at the pale, flushed face that looked back whose dark, ringed

eyes watched as the boy pulled his sleeves as far as they would go, and grabbed his bag, leaving the bathroom.

Or...at least tried to.

Each stepped dragged, like lead that trailed his ankles, the weight of sickness twisting and sinking in his thoughts as with each moment he attempted to right himself. In the back of his mind, addled and slack with fatigue as it was, remained thankful that him, and only him, roamed those empty halls, eying the solemn trail of red that soaked his sleeves and dripped down onto the pristine white floors beneath his feet. Despite himself, Dash couldn't help but try to rub out some of it as he went along, that is, until the sole of his shoes began to do more harm than good.

It smeared and slagged on his shoe laces that dragged upon the ground, each streak leaving a gruesome memory that seemed to dry faster than he could cover ground.

"I'm just making it worse. I...I didn't mean to make a...a mess." Stopping, the boy whispered a wavering breath, leaning upon a locker.

What was he going to do? What story could he possibly make up that could even be half-way convincing for...for this?

Pushing up from the lockers, Dash craned his neck around to gaze at the clock he could hear in his midst, flinching at its somber record.

Even more than that, he couldn't be seen like this, and the ringing of that bell would spell exposure in more ways than one if he couldn't make it in time.

Too many questions for him to avoid.

Too many eyes that he couldn't hide from.

Just the thought alone made him want to scream.

But...would him body let him run?

It seemed like the only way for him to make it.

That, or have the whole of the student body see him in such a state.

He...he didn't think he could bear it, the embarrassment, the fear.

Dash knew this sounded like an exaggeration, but he was sure, he was certain of it.

He would die.

Right then and there.

Shaking his head to clear the mounting fog, the boy thrust forward, stumbling for just a moment's time before charging forward, despite how wobbly he was.

One step, two steps, then several steps more, each one like flaming torrents as he forced himself onward. He only stopped every few seconds or so to eye that frequent clocks in his midst, not daring to reach back and further agitate his arms, though he couldn't help notice, in his stillness, the taut burning that stretched over them.

"I'm...I'm almost there. Just...just a bit...f-further." He could feel, the warmth of his sleeves, the tickling of the air vent above his head, and the growing voices of the student body as the bell tolled.

*Ding-dong.*

*Ding-dong.*

*Ding.*

*Dong.*

**'The bell is ringing; you're not gonna make it!'**

**'You weren't fast enough.'**

**'Someone is going to see you! Why couldn't you have done better?'**

"N-no. I...I can make it. I can...I can make it." Standing up, or, as others would see it, sliding along the lockers, trails of blood sticking to the metal frames, Dash, through bleary eyes, spotted many faces.

Wait.

When had so many people come?

Some avoided him, muttering silent curses as they slid past him.

Some with their hands over their noses.

Others with disgusted expressions; mostly those that knew him to punch and kick them around.

The boy guessed with the volume of bodies, they couldn't see the blood.

They couldn't smell it, either

He couldn't help but bump into a few as he scooted along the wall, whispering apologies on the wind.

Blurred vision picked the sight of the sign, the nurse's sign as it happened, several meters away opposite the ocean of bodies that blocked his way.

So far...

Too...far...

**'You'll never make it.'**

No. He...he had to...but...

**'Look at you. Weak.'**

Maybe...maybe they were right...

*So...tired...*

There were screams.

Voices and sounds that echoed like songs on his ears.

There was a moment, quiet seconds such as these, where he felt weightless as he fell to the ground, and warmth of black cloaked his vision once more.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

Note (At the end):

This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.

**Author's Note:**

This concludes this chapter, and as such, if you would like, feel free to post any critique or comments that you wish.
Thank you for tuning in, and stand by for the next chapter.